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Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe : facilitating women's participation in development through advocacy and education.

Barbara Jean Huff
University of Massachusetts Amherst

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN ZIMBABWE: FACILITATING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

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by

BARBARA JEAN HUFF

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Approved as to style and content by:

David C. Kinsey, Chair

John Higginson, Member

Robert J. Miltz, Member

Bailey W. Jackson, Dean
School of Education

ABSTRACT

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MAY 1996

BARBARA JEAN HUFF

B.B.A., CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

M.A., SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING

Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor David Kinsey

Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe have a long history. Prior to independence, both the Catholic church and the major Protestant denominations had mother's unions or women's clubs. These groups met at the congregational level weekly for prayer, singing, Bible study and support. Education was also an important function of these groups. After independence, many ecumenical and non-denominational Christian women's groups were formed. The purpose of these groups was to assist in national development and in women's development.

This dissertation explores the role of these women's organizations in facilitating women's participation in development. The premise of the study was that the church in Zimbabwe plays a large role in development and that women

are heavily involved in church life. It was not clear, however, that women's involvement resulted in their benefiting from the church's development activities and efforts. It was assumed that women's organizations would be one way that women could access those activities and the resultant benefits.

The literature review includes feminist theories, women in development (WID) and women's organizations. This provided a foundation for exploring the theoretical underpinnings of WID efforts and women's organizations, as well as the appropriateness of those theories, efforts and organizations for women in Zimbabwe.

The field research consisted of in-depth interviews with the heads of various types of Christian women's organizations as well as leaders within the Christian Council of Zimbabwe. Unpublished documents produced by the organizations were analyzed. And observations were done of one indigenous community development organization and one church-related women's club.

The data revealed that women are benefitting from church development efforts and that women's organizations are largely responsible for that. Also, that women's organizations on their own contribute greatly to community development. Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe have a major role to play in facilitating the full participation of women in development.

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CHAPTER 1

THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN ZIMBABWE: INTRODUCTION TO A STUDY

Introduction

I lived in Zambia for two years in the late 1980s and worked for a Christian relief and development agency. The organization had been working in Africa for about 25 years and is currently present in about twenty countries there. The organization has over the years established strong working relationships with many church leaders of various denominations, with other Christian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and with the various councils of churches all over the continent.

Through my work, as Administrative Assistant for Zambia and Zimbabwe, I had the opportunity to meet regularly with local church leaders and NGO representatives to discuss our work or potential collaboration. Through those professional relationships I was able to visit churches and Christian groups in many parts of both countries. During those visits and through my own church involvement, I observed that women were heavily represented in the church membership and that they were very active members.

Church women met together for prayer, singing, Bible study and to co-ordinate the work necessary to maintain the church. This maintenance included both the structure and the community. For example, they cleaned the church, cooked for special occasions, visited the sick and bereaved, organized

funerals and weddings. They also met together to organize and pursue income-generating activities such as cultivating vegetable gardens and making school uniforms. However, the money earned from such activities often went back into the maintenance of the church.

I began to wonder what women got in return for their devotion to the church. Because from casual observation during my time working there, it seemed to be men who got opportunities for training and employment with the church. Any opportunities that went to women seemed to be at the urging of an outside organization, such as the one I worked with. Was that really true? Did the church give nothing back to its most devoted and energetic followers? Certainly it couldn't be that simple. Women went to church in such large numbers, met frequently in addition to regular services and volunteered many hours to sustaining their churches for some reason. I wanted to know more about those reasons.

Working Definitions

There are three terms used throughout the study that need defining as they are key to understanding the analysis. I will give my own definitions of the terms because it was those personal meanings which helped me conceptualize the inquiry.

The first is the term "Christian". Spirituality and religion are complex and deeply personal things. In Zimbabwe the complexity is partly due to the co-mingling of two

strong and very different belief systems. Christianity has been widely adopted in the country but traditional or indigenous religious beliefs and practices remain, even among Christians. However, I do not believe that retaining some traditional beliefs and practices makes one less of a Christian. Nor do I believe that being a faithful church-goer makes one more of a Christian. Keeping in mind that there is also a great deal of diversity in the beliefs and practices of Christians who do not have other religious traditions, I use the term in the broadest and simplest sense. Christianity in this study means the religious system based on the teachings of and a belief in Christ.

The term "church" in the study, unless otherwise noted, means the whole of the Christian body in Zimbabwe. That includes the various denominations, congregations, leaders, church members and Christian organizations. However, I also recognize that there is a hierarchy in the church as there is in any social institution. So although every person and group or organization is a part of the whole, they are not all the same.

The term "development" is used in different ways in the study and should be considered from the particular context. In general, however, it is used to mean a planned and managed attempt to increase economic productivity of a group of people. This increased productivity is supposed to lead to a higher standard of living for those involved in it. A

higher standard of living is usually understood to be a more modern one and is measured quantitatively using indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality, years of schooling completed and average family income. Although I challenge this concept of development and some of the activity it leads to, it is the dominant or mainstream definition and what is being discussed in the paper unless otherwise noted.

When talking about church development work, I mean something different than the above definition. Although the activities are often the same, I believe there is a difference in secular and church development work because they are based on a different concept of development. The church's concept includes an appreciation of certain values including compassion, responsibility, communality and service. So even if programs or projects are similar between secular and church groups, planning, management and especially evaluation are often quite different.

Focus of the Study

The focus of this study was an exploration of the role of Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe and particularly their impact on women's lives and women's participation in development. Although my professional experience in Zimbabwe was with the church in general, I chose to focus on women's organizations within the church for my research. In order to answer the questions listed

above, this seemed the best route to take. Because if there was anyplace where women would have access to opportunities or get a return on their investment in the church, I thought it would be these organizations run by and for women.

In addition to considering how the organizations helped women to benefit from their participation in church life and activities, I was interested in how the organizations contributed to church development efforts, and whether that contribution was recognized. If these organizations themselves are marginalized within the church, is it to women's advantage to be involved in them? The women's organizations are one of the parts of the whole referred to in my definition of church. One part that may be viewed as less equal than some others. They are the focus of this study.

Development in Africa

Few would disagree with the contention that the 1950's and 60's plans of assisting poor, newly independent countries in Africa to develop via Western models of modernization and economic growth theories has not been realized (Chileshe, 1983; Judge, 1991; and Samater, 1984). Perhaps the reason for its failure is simply the rationale behind it:

> "Development" was partly an attempt at a repeat performance of the "Marshall Plan" which had been so successfully applied to war-ravaged Germany while at the same time the newly independent nations remained securely within the western

> sphere of influence and, equally importantly, the free trade zone (Carmen, 1991).

However, in spite of the lack of success of such models the **idea** of this development being possible has become firmly entrenched in both the donor and recipient nations' psyche and structures (Chenery, 1980). Consequently, institutions, organizations, programs and projects based on traditional development models continue to receive support.

> Massive resources were thrown into that battle; the work of a renowned economist of those days, Walt Rostow, on "The Stages of Economic Growth" (1960) carried the revealing subtitle: "a non-communist manifesto". The stages of growth read like a recipe book (Ibid, p 67).

Conversely, those institutions, organizations, programs and projects which are successful, but in some way unorthodox, often go unsupported. This is unfortunate since the reality is that:

> It is undoubtedly the case that almost worldwide, local government has declined in autonomy and efficiency in the last twenty years or more, while the role of community-based organizations and other NGOs has increased (Rakodi, 1989).

An excellent example of this community-based work is that of the Christian church and other religious groups as well.

The church, in any country, is one social institution which effectively reaches the grassroots while at the same time having formal and informal relationships with national and even international bodies and systems. Its ability to be both inside and outside the power structures of a society make it unique. This is true in Zimbabwe where, for example,

most churches - regardless of size - belong to the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. Since this is an institution with systems of administration and accountability already in place, ideally this would be a good structure into which development assistance (both technical and financial) could be funneled. This has not, however, been the case.

Long before there was a World Bank, long before there was a USAID, and long before there were any secular non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Africa, the church was there. And from the beginning, the church was not only concerned with saving souls or winning converts. Although it varied considerably from denomination to denomination or mission board to mission board, the Christian church in Africa has always been involved in providing for the material well-being of its members as well as the spiritual.

> During and after colonial rule many individuals and organizations attempted to improve the lives of indigenous Africans by initiating rural development projects. Most notable was the role assumed by religious missions in the development of many rural systems in Africa in general and Zambia in particular. Yet, in the literature on rural development, missions are often referred to only incidentally (Crehan 1981, 1984; Jaeger, 1981), and studies examining their impacts on the human geography of rural areas are few (Weissling, 1990).

Though not named development work, that is exactly what the church in Africa was involved in when it built schools, hospitals, clinics, and demonstration farms (Anderson, 1977; Vincent and Carey, 1988). Now that the church leadership is

African, development work continues, but with many changes and much struggle.

Also from the beginning, women have been both heavily involved in and marginalized by the church in Africa (Oduyoye, 1988 and Ramodibe, 1988). They were heavily involved by being present in large numbers and doing much of the work of the church. They were marginalized by only being allowed certain kinds of participation and work, while being denied opportunities for the education, training and advancement available within the formal structure. According to one theologian, women's support has been there since the earliest days of the Christian church and the marginalization is not only still in evidence almost 2000 years later, but also is not confined to Africa.

> Salome and many others put their material wealth and spiritual resources at the disposal of the Jesus school. Lydia and Priscilla supported with all their resources the Jesus movement in its infancy. Through the centuries women have been ardent supporters, promoters and facilitators of community in their churches, as they are today....(but) It is worth noting, however, that it took seven years from its founding for the WCC to establish a department to deal with the issue of the co-operation of women and men in church and society (Oduyoye, 1990).

African women were attracted to the church because it provided a refuge for those unwelcome or unappreciated in traditional society; for example, widows who did not want to remarry, divorcees and the barren. It was also a refuge for those opposed to certain practices such as early, arranged marriages and polygamy. However, the mission church took

advantage of these women by accepting their labor and giving little in return. Educational opportunities were usually limited to "Christian education", i.e. a combination of Bible study, European social values, and basic literacy (if personal Bible study was considered important within a particular denomination). Unfortunately, this trend continued for generations. Sexual discrimination was one of the few areas of agreement between Eurocentric Christianity and African traditional systems (Fabella and Oduyoye, 1988).

Statement of the Problem

Most development projects in Africa are funded, managed and evaluated by Western employees of Western organizations or state employees of a national government. Many of these programs and projects are insensitive, impractical and even detrimental to community development. According to Ramphele, the reason some projects are failures while others succeed is "inadequate attention to power relationships and their impact on the lives of ordinary people" (1990, p 9). Other more specific reasons for the negative effect of some development efforts are that they are planned by persons unfamiliar with local realities; they tend to further the gaps between the haves and the have-nots; they are short-term and follow-up is inadequate; they are too large and complex to be locally managed, yet their administration is not decentralized; they do not make good use of local knowledge, skills and resources; they do not share with

local people the philosophy or rationale behind the work; and, local leadership, hierarchies and norms are not respected. And it is not just "outsiders" who are responsible for this, as development cannot happen without some form of consent from leadership in developing countries. The reason for their collusion is alluded to in the following passage:

> After independence, both donors and many wester-educated African leaders acted as though they were convinced that development could be achieved by the systematic application of rational 'modern' techniques and concepts, using state institutions based on Weberian bureaucratic principles that were not compatible with the beliefs and practices of African society. Little serious attention was given to the possible enhanced role of indigenous institutions. The 'participation' of ordinary people in development was conceived as a unidirectional top-down process: the leaders led and the people were supposed to follow (Landell-Mills, 1992).

The problem of insensitive, impractical and unhelpful development activity in Africa is being challenged on many fronts. One of the strongest challenges is the NGO movement. Non-governmental organizations certainly include the Christian church, whose long-standing involvement in development work has been discussed. The church is well placed for such involvement, as it is a large and sometimes powerful institution in many countries on the continent. The church has a long history and in many communities is trusted and respected, even by non-members and non-Christians. This is true in Zimbabwe where it is a vibrant and important part of civil society with a large and faithful membership. As

the church in Zimbabwe confronts the problems inherent in using Western development models in Africa, how is it addressing an issue of great importance in any development programs? That is the issue of including women.

The specific problem studied in this research project was if and how Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe play a role in facilitating women's participation in church development activities. This problem was chosen from a perception, real or imagined, that women are marginalized within the Christian church, and that church women's groups, deliberately or inadvertently, maintain that marginalization by keeping them segregated in a "women's ghetto".

Overview of Design and Research Questions

The inquiry was designed as a multi-site case study of Christian organizations in Zimbabwe. The case studies were compiled through in-depth interviews, document analysis and observation. Most of the organizations examined were women's NGOs or clubs. However, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and its development arm, Christian Care, were also included in the study as they are the major players in development work done in Zimbabwe by Zimbabwean Christians. The description of organizational features like the age, history, size and focus of the organizations chosen for study, give a broad picture of the work of the church in general in Zimbabwe. This broad picture then frames the examination of the extent

to which indigenous Christian women's organizations' have an impact on community development and on women's lives.

This study examines a phenomenon occurring at the intersection of three distinct areas: the Christian church in Zimbabwe, issues of women in development, and the role of non-governmental organizations in development in Zimbabwe.

The overall question guiding the study was: In what ways and to what extent do Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe have a significant impact on women's participation in development?

Secondary analytical questions were grouped under three categories and included:

A. Development in Zimbabwe

1. What is the current state of development in Zimbabwe?

2. What is the role of NGOs in development in the country?

B. Church development efforts

3. What is the current status of the relationship between the church and the government; and, how does that affect the role of Christian NGOs involved in development work?

4. What are the unique aspects of Christian development work that make it different? What make it effective or ineffective?

5. What is the current status of women in the church in Zimbabwe in general and, in particular, with regard to its development work?

6. What are the current policies and procedures (formal and informal) of churches and Christian NGOs in Zimbabwe with regard to including women in development activities, including at the planning and decision-making levels?

7. What opportunities for education and training does the church provide women so they can improve their involvement in its various activities?

C. Christian women's organizations

8. What roles are played by Christian women's organizations in the areas of church development work, women's participation in development activity and women's personal development?

9. If those roles are positive, how can these organizations be strengthened and supported? And, where should they seek that support?

Significance of the Study

There is scant reference on Christian organizations within the Women in Development literature. However, Christian - and other religions - play a significant role in the lives of Third World women. Therefore, there is a need to pay attention to religious organizations. Women have always organized themselves, formally and informally, for various reasons. Studies on these women's groups in Africa have mainly revolved around the discourse on economic development and therefore focused on market associations. Also, historical studies have explored the role of church women's groups in various African societies, particularly how they assisted women in dealing with colonialism and urbanization. However, two issues not studied adequately are: how and why those groups survived long after the missionaries which started them, and what precipitated the birth of their counterparts, the indigenous, non-denominational Christian women's NGOs.

In addition to getting together for purposes of economic development or exchanging emotional support, Christian women form groups for other reasons. Some of those reasons are: personal development through education; organizing community development that is not necessarily economic (or income-generating); and providing a forum through which women can have a unified and more powerful voice. Providing information on the nature and roles of women's NGOs in an African setting will be a significant contribution to the literature on women in development and hopeful will draw attention to them as vehicles for change.

Overall Approach of Study

Working from a qualitative paradigm, the overall approach to the research was a multi-site case study using multiple data-gathering methods. Vincent Rogers (1984) gives nine beliefs of qualitative researchers. Three of them articulate my own reasons for choosing qualitative research. Those are:

> ...any social entity or institution is enormously complex and subtle; people and institutions must be studied holistically and not in isolation from other forces that may influence them; and, the most effective way to study a given phenomenon is through direct, on site, face to face contact with the people and events in question (Rogers, 1984).

The sites chosen were the offices of basically similar organizations. The individual compilations of the case studies, including the history and current work of each, were used as building blocks for the overall exploration of

the relationship between the Christian church and women in development (WID) in Zimbabwe.

In addition to studying the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), as an umbrella organization, and Christian Care, its development arm, several Christian women's organizations were looked at. A variety of organizations were used because illustrating the diversity of Christian women's groups was important to my study. I included the ZCC and Christian Care, even though they are not exclusively women's organizations, because of the central role they play in the development activities of the church in Zimbabwe.

I chose this method because case studies allowed for an in-depth look at some of the types of organizations making up the institution called "the Church". It was most appropriate for this research because "a case study is an examination of a particular phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, an institution or a social group" (Merriam, 1991, p 9). In this study I am looking at both an institution and an activity (development) carried out by that institution. Since I was hoping to generate data which would be useful to practitioners, I thought the type of information garnered from this method would be most helpful. According to Stake (1991), "Case study knowledge is more concrete...more contextual...more developed by reader interpretation...(and) based more on reference populations determined by the reader" (Ibid., p 15). This is exactly the

type of information that did result from my data gathering. Since my research questions dealt with both practice and philosophy the case study method was best-suited. Case studies allow for multiple data-gathering techniques to be used which are complementary. "Unlike experimental, survey, or historical research, case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis" (Ibid, p 10). In this case participant observation will get at the practice issues and questions, while interviews will address those of philosophy.

The Setting - Unit of Analysis

The setting for my study was Zimbabwe, particularly Harare, the capitol, but also rural Matabeleland. Zimbabwe was selected for several reasons. First, because of access and experience. Having traveled to and worked in the country, I had both contacts and a solid background knowledge of its history and cultures. Secondly, Zimbabwe is representative of my area of interest, i.e., "Christian Africa". Zimbabwe is largely Christian and has been a popular mission field for well over one hundred years. Since independence, and even before, it has also been in the process of making the church leadership more African. Zimbabwe's relative success with development, given its "age" means there are lessons to be learned from it. Although there has been some further decent into poverty and related problems in the past decade, and in spite of

development efforts, the situation in Zimbabwe is certainly much more hopeful than in many other places.

The population under consideration were Christians. Although non-Christians are involved in or affected by Christian development aid and projects as well, they were not included in interviews. That was because one aspect of the study was to explore how (Christian) spirituality and religious beliefs affect one's perception of the role of the church in development. Additionally, within the general population of Zimbabwean Christians, the main focus was on women. I focused on women for several reasons. Generally because there is still a large knowledge gap about women's lives in general and in Africa in particular. But more specifically related to my particular area of interest, since from prior casual observation I saw that women constitute the majority of active Christians in Zimbabwe, I wanted to see if and how they benefitted from the work of the church. Although the church's own record of being inclusive of women leaves much to be desired, it was the first institution since the advent of colonialism to offer any opportunities for education and development to women. And that phenomena is deserving of further exploration.

Data Collection Methods

The primary data collection method was in-depth interviews. The secondary methods were participant observation and document analysis. My reason for choosing

interviewing as my primary method was that to answer the questions posed, observations and documents alone would not have been sufficient. First hand views were needed to obtain the type of information that I was after as well as an interpretation of that information from participants.

Interviewees included the head of each organization and in two cases another employee or member. I also did two group interviews. As for one-on-one interviews, there were a total of thirteen. This gave me a broad diversity of perspectives. The following are the areas that the interviews covered: personal background data; personal interpretation of role of church/Christianity in people's lives; relationship between religion and development in Zimbabwe; involvement of women in development in Zimbabwe; major issues facing women in Zimbabwe today; and, Christian women's organizations' role in assisting women. Although these areas are broad and each interview took its own individual shape, an interview guide was thought to be important and used whenever possible. Although, I wanted interviewees to take the lead to a certain extent, I used a guide because:

> An interview guide is prepared in order to make sure that basically the same information is obtained from a number of people by covering the same material. The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interview is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. Thus, the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style--but with the focus on a

> particular subject that has been predetermined (Patton, 1980).

I was able to act as a participant observer in two rural areas of Zimbabwe, where the both church and women's organizations are active. Those organizations were not the branches of the same organizations whose leaders were interviewed in Harare, however. I was able to observe and participate in a variety of activities in the rural communities, including: women's club meetings; community organization meetings; church services; and, informal social gatherings of women and mixed-gender groups of Christians. Participant observation was appropriate in this study because...

> Through observation, the researcher learns about behaviors and the meanings attached to those behaviors. An assumption is made that behavior is purposive and expressive of deeper values and beliefs (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

The document analysis was also helpful, especially in compiling the individual case studies by giving background and historical information on some of the organizations. This also assisted in locating relationships between the organizations. Documents examined included: mission statements; development plans; program and/or project plans; course outlines and materials; budgets and grant applications; and, many other interesting finds. I included document analysis because although...

> These materials have been viewed by many researchers as extremely subjective, representing the biases of the

> promoters and, when written for external consumption, presenting an unrealistically glowing picture of how the organization functions...It is precisely **for** these properties (and others) that qualitative researchers look upon them favorably. Remember, qualitative researchers are not interested in "the truth" as it is conventionally conceived. They do not search for the "true picture of any school. Their interest in understanding how the school is defined by various people propels them toward official literature (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982).

Although the authors were writing about schools, their thoughts could apply just as well to the organizations I studied. Unfortunately, but significantly, many organizations had no printed materials to either give or lend me. For some, their organizational history is still an oral history.

The strength of the particular data-gathering methods I chose were that they allowed for flexibility, for diverse perspectives, and for examining a phenomenon with both breadth and depth. Flexibility was necessary in this study because it was exploratory. That is, I had only tentative ideas based on past observations and interactions that had generated a strong curiosity. Diverse perspectives are important when attempting to describe a social group or phenomena; especially one which can generate strong emotions, as does women's inclusion in the life of the church.

Sampling Choices and Negotiations for Access

I chose to explore the phenomenon of Christian women's organizations' role in education and development by looking

at a variety of organizations. The organizations selected had to be able to provide the pieces to the whole picture of what is happening at various levels of the institution, the church. An examination of the distinct work and role of each, together with a description of how they interact gave a more holistic picture. Each organization was important because each is unique. For example, the Council of Churches is not a women's organization but is greatly influenced by, and has influence on women. Or the YWCA which is not directly affiliated with any particular church and reaches non-church members.

Regarding the selection of individuals to interview, I chose to use a different strategy. All of my one-on-one interviews were with directors and when I interviewed pairs it was the director and the person responsible for women or training. This was an effort to get at "the big picture", that is the history and philosophy of the organizations. However, I had several other tentative assumptions that led me to interview directors. Those were that they would have been with the organization or, at least, working in similar settings for many years; that I would be able to converse easily with them in English; that they would have a perspective on the larger issues of interest to me, for example on the role of the church in development and the role of women in the church. All these assumptions proved to be true and I think I made a good choice. Also, I knew that

my observations in the rural area would give me the grassroots perspective to add to what I learned from the interviews.

In one case selection of whom to interview within the organization proved to be a more complex endeavor. Initially, I wanted to speak only to the head of the women's division within the Christian Council. However, I was advised, thankfully, by a Zimbabwean friend that I should see the General Secretary first. After canceling on me twice, I finally interviewed him and then asked him who I should speak to. He referred me to the former, rather than the current, head of the women's division and the interview with that woman proved to be one of my best. So, doing things "the right way" rather than my way was for the best. But I would not have had those two great interviews had I decided who to speak to without consulting with a local person.

Selection of observation sites was not done as deliberately as was selection of interviewees. I did observations in the two areas that I needed to visit for the (paid) work I was doing. Fortunately, my belief that there would be a Christian woman's group wherever I had to go, was true. The first group I spent time with was not affiliated with any particular church but was definitely a group of Christian women. They prayed and sang hymns at all their

meetings and preached Christian values pretty explicitly without using "religious" language.

The second group I spent time with was also not affiliated with a church and in fact was not officially a Christian organization. But, they too used prayer, hymns and Bible study as part of their meetings. I used the word officially instead of explicitly because their faith was clearly evident, whereas in the literature on the organization it appears to be a secular NGO. The fact that these two organizations that I did not deliberately select were in fact Christian is in itself telling. More often than not it is Christians in a community who are doing community development, whether a church is involved or not.

Negotiating access to the institutions was much easier than I had imagined. I did not have direct contacts going in. I first wrote letters of introduction and then followed up with phone calls. Some people were somewhat tentative on the telephone and asked lots of clarifying questions. Most people immediately said yes and some saw me on the same day that I call. No one that I contacted refused to be interviewed. All but one of my interviewees were very open and responsive. I think the reason is partly cultural and partly that everyone I spoke to was generally enthusiastic about their work and enjoyed the opportunity to talk about it.

The "mechanics" of gaining access were more difficult. The unreliability of the telephone system was surprisingly one of my biggest frustrations. Also, the people I needed to talk to were very busy and traveled a lot, so connecting with them was difficult. However, I understand that gaining access is an important part of the process of doing qualitative research and the complexities of doing it in a culturally different setting added to it. It was indeed a learning experience for me. So I was grateful for having read the following reminder:

> The student, however, should be alerted to the analytical value of, for example, getting the runaround by respondents or being welcomed with open arms (Kleinman, 1980).

The last area needing negotiation was the use of my tape recorder. I was aware that it could inhibit or distract people who are not used to it, or even cause them to refuse to be interviewed. I handled each situation differently. At times, I realized once there that it would not be acceptable or appropriate to use the tape recorder. Most times I did ask if I could use it. Only once was I refused.

Data Management

The reality of managing field data was quite different than writing about how I was going to do so. When writing my proposal I had several good ideas which proved unmanageable. But I did manage to remember and use two very important things that I learned about in my studies of qualitative research: interview notes and fieldnotes. What I actually

did in the field was very simple. I taped about half of my interviews but took notes at all of them. As soon as possible after each interview I transcribed my notes in two formats and in two separate notebooks. In one I tried to answer all of my basic factual-type questions, such as the number of members or the size of budget. In the other, I wrote out, verbatim if possible, responses to more open-ended questions. I also wrote out opinions offered and ideas shared which were not in direct response to particular questions.

Since I was using a variety of data-gathering methods and gathering a great deal of material, I used fieldnotes to pull the pieces together in a meaningful way. Fieldnotes are defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) as "the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study". I kept a personal journal in addition to a fieldnotes notebook. In the fieldnotes I recorded thoughts and feelings about the research process, as well as preliminary ideas about my findings. I also used the field notebook to refine my interview guide namely to add, delete or change questions. I used it to brainstorm about the initial themes in the responses and other data I was collecting. In my field notebook I also wrote down my impressions from my observations and informal conversations I had with people about my interests. I made the observation

notes as detailed as possible, including thoughts about tentative interpretations of what I was seeing and hearing.

Additionally, I made an outline and modified it throughout the field study. This outline included a section for each institution. There were sub-sections for each of the three data-gathering techniques used. Further sub-divisions were, for example, under document analysis, a list of each document reviewed. This outline was later used to structure the actual data into a workable document with which to begin construction of the case studies.

Once I returned to the states, I transcribed my tape recorded interviews. I typed up those transcriptions, my handwritten interview notes, and my fieldnotes. I made two hard copies of everything and also saved them on both disc and hard drive.

Data Analysis

The organized data was analyzed by first pulling out any concepts that seemed significant even if they were only mentioned once. I kept these key concepts in the back of my mind throughout the analysis process and they became the basis of the theory that emerged for me. Secondly, I began looking for patterns and developing themes from them. Patterns being ideas that occur with enough frequency to deserve further exploration. Themes being tentative interpretations of the cause of the ideas considered patterns. Since I had gathered information from a variety of

sources and in various forms, I was able to re-check assumptions based on perceived patterns before further developing tentative themes. This process of locating patterns and developing themes was repeated as often as seemed necessary.

Once I had a set of themes another delve into the literature seemed appropriate; especially since I had found both published and unpublished articles in the field that were new to me. A discussion of some of the literature I covered was used to show how my findings differed from or extended current theory or practice. Finally, I worked my themes together into a complex but clear picture of my interpretations of what I saw and heard; and, I refer to that as a tapestry. I also developed a description of a view of the world which I called Zimbabwean Feminism, an emerging theory.

Trustworthiness

Unlike the concerns within the quantitative paradigm of validity, repeatability or comparability, qualitative research findings are usually unique to a particular setting and/or group. However, there is still concern that the research project's findings have worth beyond the confines of benefitting those directly involved (unless we are talking about action research). One way to do this is to insure that the framework and design are trustworthy. Some criteria for evaluating trustworthiness in a study are that

its results be plausible and coherent; that the facts correspond to known facts; that it be adequately documented; that the researcher has consulted with or read experts' work; that the researcher is independent; that it accounts for alternative explanations; that it describes the study's limitations and that sound procedures are used (Murphy, 1980). In sum, to me that means the framework, methodology and interpretation have to be reliable, in the general rather than scientific sense of the word.

Ways to insure such trustworthiness have been developed by qualitative researchers and some were used in my study. Those are triangulation, a peer debriefer, a journal and member checks. The type of triangulation I used was multiple methods. Those are described in detail in the data-gathering methods section above. Triangulation helps check information gathered from one source by comparing it to information on the same topic gathered from a different source or sources. The check is not only to validate but can also broaden or deepen the description of the idea or activity in question.

Peer debriefing is listed as a component of "credibility", one of the "design features to help ensure trustworthy qualitative studies" by Lincoln and Guba (1985, chap. 11). Peer debriefing is using a friend and/or colleague as a "sounding board" during the different phases of the study. This person's role is vital and varied. They can listen to your reflections on the content and process as

you gather and then analyze your data; help you sort out thoughts and feelings as you articulate them; help you avoid making pre-mature evaluations, theories or conclusions; and, help you realize when it is time to leave the field and/or leave off the analysis. I was fortunate to have a few people willing to play this role for me.

Member checks are simply allowing participants in your study to review your data. This may involve reading over your notes, asking questions, listening to tapes or reading transcriptions of interviews. Additionally, they not only read or hear the material, but comment on it. This opportunity to clarify or modify data (by the person who provided it) before you analyze it can be invaluable in increasing the trustworthiness of the study. This is critical in qualitative research where the primary instrument of data-gathering is the very fallible human being. Unfortunately, I was able to do this only to a limited extent. However, I attempted to overcome this by relying heavily on my informants' own words in the Data Presentation chapter and hope the reader agrees that I remained true to the ideas and thoughts presented through those words in my analysis.

Organization of Chapters

The paper is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter has introduced the topic, the purpose for the study and the research questions. In it I also described the

design and methodology and explained the choices I made. Chapter two is a brief review of three bodies of literature. Those are feminist theories, Women in Development (WID) and women's organizations. In this chapter I first try to demonstrate how various feminist theories have had an impact on WID practices. Then I review what kinds of studies have been done on women's organizations, particularly in Africa, to show where there are information gaps that my study would help to fill.

Chapter three gives a historical background of Zimbabwe in general and the Christian church in Zimbabwe in particular. In Chapter four there is a description of Zimbabwe today. Politics, development, economics, women's status, the role of non-governmental organizations and the role of the church are all covered. These two chapters were an effort to "set the stage" for the specifics of my study. It should be particularly helpful for those readers unfamiliar with Zimbabwe or who have not been in the country recently.

Chapter five presents the data. In it are five fairly detailed case studies of different Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe. Much of the data is presented in the words of my informants. Some preliminary analysis is also interspersed where appropriate. Chapter six, however, is the more in-depth analysis of the research. In it I discuss the patterns and themes which emerged from the data

as I worked with it. I then combine the themes to develop an overall picture of my findings. Because of the nature of the research questions and methodology used, I considered the study as primarily descriptive and secondarily analytical. Therefore, the inquiry resulted in what was essentially a comprehensive description of the roles women's organizations play in Zimbabwe and an exploration of the meaning made by the leadership of some of those organizations. However, in addition to the description, I also developed what I called a theory of Zimbabwean Feminism. I did this to follow through on the idea that I used in my literature review about the link between feminist theory and practice in WID. Although my theory was not articulated as such by my informants, it was apparent to me as they described their motivation, philosophy and the work they were doing in their various organizations.

Chapter seven is the concluding chapter. It begins with an attempt to pull things together and summarize all the pieces of the answers to the research questions. I talk specifically about the role and contributions of Christian women's organizations both in women's lives and the community in general. Then, I suggest some policy implications as well as the significance of the study's findings for development practitioners. Next, I discuss some areas for further study which could use my research as background material. Then, I briefly process some of the

things I learned about research from doing the study. I end the chapter, and the paper, with some personal reflections about the importance of religion and spirituality in culture and, therefore in development work.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARD A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: LITERATURE REVIEW

Although, there is little mention of Christian women's organizations within two of them, I attempted to situate my study in three bodies of literature. Those are feminism and feminist theories, Women in Development (WID), and women's organizations. I chose women in development writings because my research question concerned women's participation in development. I chose feminist theories because of their apparent influence on WID practice and because I thought they could help explain the importance of women's organizations in women's lives.

Feminist Theories

In this section I will briefly discuss each of the major feminist theories plus Third World and African feminist theories. I will also show the relationship between theories and Women in Development strategies. Illustrating that relationship is important because it is clear from the WID literature that feminism has played a role in the design of those strategies. Lastly, I will discuss the literature on women's organizations, particularly in Africa.

This paper will not attempt to address the whole history of feminism. It will begin, instead, with the second wave of the women's movement in the United States in the 1960's. Before doing that I think it would be interesting to share a Zimbabwean feminist scholar's description of the

first wave of feminists. Speaking about Mary Wollestonecraft and her contemporaries, she writes:

> Although they argued the case for women in the abstract, when it came to the concrete issues of struggle, the feminists focused on their own class and expected some men of their class to support their position. These women took the capitalist system, the organization of work within and outside households, as well as racism and class divisions, as unproblematic (Gaidzanwa, 1993).

She could easily have been discussing twentieth century Western feminists. Early proponents of women's rights, the so-called second wave of feminists, shared liberal ideas; that is, that equality with men should be their general goal. Liberal feminists believed that the problem was a historical, legal and cultural one. Therefore, if women were encouraged to seek, and allowed to gain, access to inputs such as education and training or credit and capitol, for example, on a level with men, they would reap the same benefits as a result.

> The liberal feminist solution to female marginalization was to prescribe the necessary legal and administrative changes which would ensure that women had equal access to work and its economic rewards (Jaquette, 1982).

Since at the time of the re-birth of the women's movement there were both legal and societal limitations on women's development in industrialized countries, in addition to advocating for changes in laws, women themselves were the focus and target. Women were encouraged to get further education and to train in non-traditional fields. They were encouraged to seek employment outside the home and again in

non-traditional fields. They were encouraged to work harder and be more aggressive about their professional development. This "pick yourself up by the bootstraps" attitude was then inappropriately transferred to the international development arena. Liberal feminism played right into the efficiency type of development philosophies which evolved early in WID which warned that leaving women out of development would have dire consequences and including them would bring great returns. One study discussing feminists theories said:

> The failure to educate girls can have far-reaching effects on the development of a country, especially in production and health. Education for girls and women is thus considered an investment with probably higher economic returns than that of boys and men (Mannathoko, 1992).

Improving women and girls access to education and the formal labor market, in practice proved to be difficult if not impossible. Most women in both developed and developing regions were still working as unpaid laborers within their own families and communities at that time. There were long-standing, culturally specific economic, political and social reasons for this. Therefore, liberal feminist based WID programs, which sought to solve the "woman problem" by attempting to bring women into the public sphere (specifically into wage labor); and to change laws that allowed for discrimination against women met with much resistance.

Because liberal feminist ideas were contrary to both capitalist ideas of development and, I believe, to the

beliefs about a woman's place held by the Western men engineering the process, projects continued to focus on developing infrastructure which was believed necessary for macro-level, industrialization-based economic development (Wilson, 1990). Also, having African women stay home and provide for the material needs of themselves and their families, allowed African men to work for low wages in factories, mines and on commercial farms; thereby increasing GNP. When the focus shifted to include rural development in the modernization process and did address the needs of, for example, indigenous farmers, women still did not benefit because they were simply ignored.

> Contemporary development advisors from the industrialized nations have reinforced the same pattern when they have made men the preferred recipients of new seeds, tools, training, and credit, even in areas where women are the primary agriculturalists (Bourque and Warren, 1987).

The main critique of liberal feminism was that it did not address the cultural and historical contexts of societies that caused women to be at a disadvantage to men to begin with. In other words, it began with the how of equalizing women's status with men, without ever asking why there was inequality. Nor did it acknowledge that in addition to the inequality between the sexes, there was inequality between men themselves. Also, on the practical side, while the proposed solutions of liberal feminism did include advocating for changes in laws and male attitudes within a particular country, it did not include advocacy for

changes on an international level. If an analysis of the international economic system had been made, liberal feminists would have gained a more sophisticated understanding of Third World women's situation; as well as their own complicity in it.

Another area within third world development specifically, that liberalism can also be criticized for is not distinguishing between men and women in its faith in the modernization process.

> Thus, standard liberal theory sees women and development as part of an overall process of modernization--technology, the movement from a subsistence to a cash economy, and the development of complex organizations that increase the need for labor mobility. Any differences between male and female absorption into this process are seen as a failure of diffusion, not as a failure of the model itself (Jaquette, 1982).

Out of the critique of liberal feminism another theory developed. Radical feminism stresses the idea that gender-based oppression is the first and greatest oppression in society. The reason for that oppression is the system of patriarchy. In other words, there are socially created problems based on biological differences between men and women that allow the former to oppress the latter. Radical feminists believe that the greatest determinant in one's life is whether one is born male or female. While liberal feminists talk about equal opportunity, radical feminists talk about equality in a much broader sense. These later...

> Feminists see urbanization, mobility, and the conversion to the cash economy not as unalloyed

> benefits, but as processes that cut women off from their traditional economic and social roles and thrust them into the modern sector where they are discriminated against and exploited, ...This condition, in turn, increases female dependency (Jaquette, p 271).

They would argue, then, that bringing women into the wage labor market, does not necessarily make her "equal". Particularly since it is even more unlikely in the Third World that a woman working is in the formal sector and earning an equivalent salary to her male co-workers. However, it continued to be true that as feminist ideas developed in the West, they influenced ideas about Third World women's situation. In 1982, Barbara Lewis wrote that...

> ...women in industrialized states reassessed and rejected their subordinate and dependent status. They protested the sexual division of labor and of inequality in access to justly compensated work as well as the cult of motherhood, femininity and wifeliness. Western women found analogous, but more onerous inequities, in Third World societies, and saw the role of Western sex role models in worsening the situation of third World women (Lewis, p 102).

Radical feminists' solutions differ because they have to do with restructuring society in ways that will allow women the same freedoms from "women's work" as men have. They contend that nothing short of a technological revolution has to take place. WID programs that reflect these values would be family planning clinics and day care centers (Gough, 1975). While such programs definitely have value in any society they were viewed with suspicion by many

when framed in the language of the radical feminist. Both men and women in many developing countries were wary of family planning in general and downright hostile to ideas such as sterilization and abortion, for example.

Radical feminism was criticized for two main reasons. One, like liberal feminism, it ignored differences between men. That is, it assumed all men were oppressors when in fact men in many societies are as oppressed as women, by other men. In other words radical feminism ignored other types of oppression like racial and ethnic discrimination. To the radical feminist, the only class that matters is one's gender (Maguire, 1984 and Barrett, 1980). However, if one believes that in order to be an oppressor, a person must have power, one cannot ignore economic class in a theory of oppression. While a poor man may in fact oppress his wife within the home, their oppression, as a couple, may be much more significant due to other factors such as race and/or economic class. In her discussion of "An African Brand of Feminism" Steady writes:

> The problem with Western feminist interpretations of women's positions in Africa is that they have often been projections of male/female antagonisms that derive from Western middle-class experiences. There is often very little concern shown for the oppression by world economic systems on African **men** as well as women. Rather than presenting the problem as one of economic stratification supporting male dominance and female dependence, the concern should focus more on the effect of neocolonialism and the economic, political, and cultural domination of African societies....To a certain extent, one can say that Western men and

women have used African women as pawns in their sex war (Steady, 1981).

The second criticism of radical feminism was that it was culturally insensitive. It seemed to devalue motherhood, which in many societies is viewed as a high status position by both men and women. It seemed to blame motherhood, and thereby children, for the problems of women in particular and society in general. Obviously, this was not a popular idea in much of the world, nor with many women of color in the U.S. and other industrialized countries. Also, by focusing on reproductive activities and "solutions", it again places the burden of change on women since most contraceptive alternatives are directed at women. Finally, the devaluation of motherhood and seemingly anti-male stance of the radical feminists made the theory antithetical to many non-Western women. It must be noted, perhaps in their defense, however, that Western feminists' construction of the "male chauvinist" was a natural part of the theorizing process. A critical theory needs an object of its criticism. And while Third World women's response may seem overly conservative it was in fact itself radical. It was the beginning of a gaining of voice as Third World women increasingly, in the early eighties, denounced Western feminists' attempts to include them in some monolithic woman's identity with homogenous women's issues.

Challenging the idea of "the woman" was not limited to Third World women. Some of the other response to radical

feminism led to the development of a very different kind of feminist theory. In the same vein of denying the "sameness" of women, Marxist feminists criticized radical feminists for ignoring class. Marxist feminist theory views class, rather than gender, as the main reason for women's oppression.

> Unlike radical feminism, which views gender relations as the primary oppression, Marxist feminism presents economic or class relations as the primary oppression. In the capitalist class structure, relations between classes are based on the relation each class has to the means of production. Marxist feminist analysis then focuses on women's relation to capital and modes of production not on women's relation to men (Maguire, 1984).

In other words there are differences between women and therefore between their levels of oppression. When looking at the situation in the Third World, this theory makes sense. It is clear that the colonization of African states by European ones affected women as much as it did men. Although the effects were different, they could still be attributed to the imposition of capitalism. Although it is true that in the long-run, the introduction of the idea of private ownership and a cash economy had an even more detrimental impact on African women.

Today, the continued economic oppression of Third World countries is an oppression of Third World women. This is apparent in Zimbabwe, the country under study, where the current Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP), an agreement between the government and the World Bank and IMF is having an adverse effect on all poor people. Since poor

people are mostly women and children, imposing capitalist ideals (which is essentially what ESAP does) results in the greater oppression of women (Geisler, 1993).

Marxist feminists would therefore propose, instead of WID programs, changes that focus on the economy and social justice on a macro-level. They would advocate rejection of structural adjustment programs by the governments of developing countries because of the proven negative effects such programs have on women. Additionally, they might advocate for changes in economic policies and business practices of rich nations that adversely affect the economies and people in Southern nations; or, education of Northerners about personal lifestyle issues that directly affect poor people in the South.

From a critique of Marxist feminist theory, sometimes referred to as "the unhappy marriage between Marxism and feminism" (Sargent, 1981), there developed yet another feminist theory. This was called socialist feminism because it was developed by women in socialist countries. They argued that capitalism could not be blamed for women's oppression, making Marxism the solution, because in socialist countries women were still oppressed. If the arguments of the Radical and Marxist feminists were correct, gender-based oppression would be eliminated under socialism. However, this did not occur.

> Since the 1960s several Third World states have elected socialialist governments or have had

> socialist revolutions. It might be imagined that under socialism class equality would mean gender egalitarianism. However, such an assumption is patently over-optimistic: indigenous cultural constructions of gender do not disappear with the advent of socialist policies, nor, where socialist policies have intervened in existing productive relations, have they necessarily improved the conditions and status of women (Brydon, 1898).

socialism Even within nationalist struggles with a socialist ideology, women experienced sexism from their male counterparts. And once the battles were won, women did not experience the new freedom in the same way that men did. According to socialist feminists, patriarchy is the problem; not capitalism (Ehrlich, 1981). Socialist feminists understand the need to look at society as a whole and to seek out the root of the problem, the basis of women's oppression. With input from women of color, they have included race to the mix of gender and economic class in the search for answers to the questions. They have, for example, helped put a concrete context around general discussions of gender issues.

> In Southern Africa, the general poverty amongst the peasantry and workers who are, in the majority, Blacks, has indicated to poor women how much their fortunes are tied to those of their classes. This has made it necessary to understand the implications of the calls for peace, equality and development in societies divided along the lines of race, class and gender. Equality, peace and development mean different things for the women in different races and classes in Southern Africa (Gaidzanwa, 1990).

Additionally, socialist feminism looks not only at the public sphere but at the private, and the relationship between the two.

> Women are most often assigned class on the basis of their father or husband's relation to the means of production. While women may then have power over lower class men, whether or not they have power equal to their husbands or fathers within that ascribed class is doubtful....Socialist feminism highlights analysis of women's oppression within the family. The intent is not to call for the abolition of the family as a social structure but to understand the implications of the present sexual division of domestic labor even when brought into the public sphere (Maguire, pp 31-32).

Third World and African feminists believe that a lack of understanding of their life situations makes it inappropriate, if not impossible, for Western feminists, whether from capitalist, Marxist or socialist countries, to develop theories about Third World women. As well as to include them in theories which use the generic "woman", that Western feminists speak about from their own experience, as a frame of reference. They see it as equally problematic to generalize about Third World, or even African or Asian, or Latin American women from studies carried out in one country.

> It is clear from what Third World women are saying that ethnocentrism, racism and imperialism constitute a deep division between White women in the West and women elsewhere. To this must be added the random citation and use of Third World data which are only aspects of other social and cultural factors in their societies. This is exploitative. More seriously, it presents a distorted picture of the conditions of Third World women (Amadiume, 1987).

So, Third World feminist theories, like the others, are in fact the result of a critique; although in this case with other women often as the object of that critique.

The range of important commonalities of Third World women that their feminist theories are built upon illustrate the depth of analysis that goes into these writings. Some of them are the importance of culture and history; the effects of economic and cultural imperialism, including racism, ethnocentrism and economic underdevelopment; and, the various and important roles that women play in both their families and societies. The complexity of these issues means it is Third World women themselves who can best understand and articulate their implications. So, it is not surprising that Third World women scholars argue further that Western feminists studying and writing about the Third World in the guise of Third World feminists are no better than those using Western feminist theories to "explain" the roots of Third World women's oppression. Recognizing the vast diversity within the Third World and the also the African continent, they contend that the many published accounts of Third World women are just another page in the "generic woman" type of scholarship.

> I argue that assumptions of privilege and ethnocentric universality, on the one hand, and inadequate self-consciousness about the effect of Western scholarship on the "third world" in the context of a world system dominated by the West, on the other, characterize a sizable extent of Western feminist work on women in the third world (Mohanty, 1991).

As is true in Asia and Latin America, African scholars and activists are developing their own feminist theories. Rather than attempting to evolve into one theory, these theories are usually grounded in a particular reality. Like Third World feminist theory, that reality includes the history, politics, and cultural context of a region or country in Africa. The women developing these theories recognize that their own identity and heritage is as important as the commonalities among African women in the analytical process. For example, it is logical that an Algerian Muslim woman, a Christian Zimbabwean woman and a "traditionalist" Nigerian woman would have different views on women's status. However, the commonalities are important. Some of the major ones have to do with the multi-faceted nature of African women's oppression, the importance of the position of African nations in the international economic and political world order, and the idea that equality with men does not need to imply being the same as men (that is that men and women do have different roles to play in society). These are complex ideas and better expressed by one African feminist scholar.

> In the black woman's experience, it is crystal clear that survival and liberation are synonymous, and that she must be the main activist in the struggle to ensure both....The experience of exploitation, racism, poverty and sexism create a multiple form of oppression which fully justifies the black woman's anger and puts her among the most oppressed peoples in the world. Her struggle for survival has necessitated the development of certain survival skills. Lack of guaranteed male

> support has increased her capacity for self-reliance....The essence of feminism is not hatred of men or blaming men, some of whom after all are also victims of oppression (Steady, 1981).

She goes on to define feminism from an African perspective:

> True feminism springs from an actual experience of oppression, a lack of socially prescribed means of ensuring one's wellbeing, and a true lack of access to the development of greater resourcefulness for survival and greater self-reliance. Above all, true feminism is impossible without intense involvement in production. All over the African diaspora, but particularly on the continent, the black woman's role in this regard is paramount. It can, therefore, be stated with much justification that the black woman is to a large extent the original feminist (Ibid, p 36).

It was writings like Steady's that were most relevant to my study. Writing by and about African women theorizing, from their own perspective, about their lives, relationship to men, their status and sources of oppression. Although Western feminist theories helped me to understand the concept of feminism and the importance of using a feminist perspective when studying women, the problem with liberal, radical, Marxist and socialist feminist theories is that they all, to varying degrees, de-historicize and de-contextualize women's situations. In a sense, this is another type of oppression because it implies that no matter where you are or where you have come from, you are just another oppressed woman. Situation specific theories, on the other hand, can help Third World women and those who work with them, to see the whole picture. And that picture

includes more than gender roles, political systems and economic systems; all of which are constructed by men. It also includes history and culture; two realms from which women can often draw strength, because they played a role in their construction.

Since there is a connection between theory and practice in development work, practitioners should look for theories that give women strength not ones that make them feel helpless. WID policies and programs using such situation specific feminist theories should, therefore, hold much promise. The most promising theories, however, would, of course, come from Third World women themselves since they are in the best position to analyze and articulate their situations.

> Any discussion of the intellectual and political construction of "third world feminisms" must address itself to two simultaneous projects: the internal critique of hegemonic "Western" feminisms, and their formulation of autonomous, geographically, historically, and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies (Ibid, p 51).

Women in Development

Although I believe that none of the four mainstream feminist theories accurately reflect African women's reality, that Western women's growing feminist consciousness affected their input into the development discourse is obvious.

> Feminist scholarship has suggested that a failure to take gender differences into account in the various approaches to development has served to

> conceal important elements in the structures which perpetuate "underdevelopment". Feminism recognizes that the issue of a women's role in development is, more than anything else, an issue of the uneven distribution of power between men and women and the marginalization of those activities in which women predominate (Antrobus, 1987.)

From the time that many African nations became independent countries in the early sixties, development was planned from the Growth Theory perspective. Development was thought of exclusively as meaning economic development. And economic development was best pursued through modernization strategies, particularly industrialization. It was believed that provision of financial aid, human resource development and technical assistance was best used on those people and places which could most immediately benefit from it. That men were the sole participants in, and therefore primary beneficiaries of, that aid, development and assistance was predicated upon the "male as breadwinner" myth.

Supposedly, the benefits of a rapidly developing society would eventually "trickle down" to those at the bottom (Griffin, 1988). As uneducated, unpaid, rural dwellers most women were inevitably at the lowest rungs of society, and would be the last to feel those trickles. However, since women were not yet viewed as a separate entity but rather as part of a family unit, this was not an issue. Because not only were women viewed as extensions of men, as member's of men's families; but, they were viewed as non-contributing members.

> Until the early 1970s, programmes devised to improve productivity, basic amenities and living conditions in rural areas tended to have two major design faults. In the first place they took little or no account of local knowledge of the environment and cultivation methods, and secondly, they tended to be addressed to household heads....The second problem in the design of rural (and urban) development schemes up to the early 1970s, that of channelling initiatives to (male) household heads, resulted from a failure (and perhaps, unwillingness) to recognize the work done by women. It was generally assumed that women worked as part of their wifely duties, something natural....(Brydon, 1989).

This emphasis on modernization and industrialization during the first development decade (1960 - 1970) proved ineffective. For women, they were also detrimental. New opportunities for male employment in the industrial sector, meant women were once again left alone to manage in the rural areas. Nor did the wages that men earned in the formal sector necessarily go into improving the economic situation of "their" rural households. Even when development strategies expanded in the seventies to include greater emphasis on agricultural development, women were at first excluded. Paralleling the myth of the male breadwinner in urban households, was the myth that men did the heavy agricultural work and what women did was peripheral.

The important realization that women too were productive, since they were actually doing most of the agricultural work in many countries, became known through efforts like Ester Boserup's book, Women's role in economic development published in 1970.

Women's "invisibility" had already been challenged by feminist anthropologists, for example. What distinguished Boserup's work was her training as an economist specializing in cross-cultural studies. Her background made her study somehow more legitimate to development planners and along with the flurry of studies that followed it provided much needed documentation about women's role in the economy.

This "new" information contributed directly to the Percy Amendment being enacted by Congress (which led to the opening of USAID's WID office) in 1973. So, by the start of the United Nation's women's decade in 1975, some things had happened which caused Women in Development (WID) to become a separate and legitimate branch of the development industry. Unfortunately, however, this has not in itself helped women to benefit from the development that has occurred in their countries and communities.

First of all, during most of the 1970s, the new information about women's activities and contributions was in a sense used against them. The work of Boserup and others has been held partly responsible for this because it was based on the faulty analysis that development was beneficial and that all men benefitted from it (Beneria and Sen, 1981). The first WID strategy, then, was to integrate women into development. It was believed that women's low status had to do with their lack of participation in development rather than with problems of development itself. This idea was

universally accepted and Women's Desks were created in all the major donor agencies to carry out WID programs (Moser, 1989).

Providing women with training and inputs for improved agricultural production, and access to credit and the market was the major focus of early WID efforts. The men in charge (in both donor and recipient countries) wanted women to be able to contribute to economic development but not to change social systems of inequality (Swantz, 1987). For example, the U.S. AID criteria for coding a project WID was, in part, as follows:

> (A)ctivities which will help integrate women into the economy of their respective countries, thereby both improving their status as well as assisting the total development effort.... Not all projects which include women as beneficiaries are to be included....However, where, in addition to the provision of goods and services, <u>women receive training or other assistance designed to increase their earning capacity or enhance their economic productivity,</u> include the relevant portion of the funding for the women's component in this category (Dixon, 1980).

So, while the studies did increase awareness of women's presence and problems, this only lead to what Maguire describes as a plan to "treat" women (1984, p 22). Approaches commonly used were production-oriented ones such as integrated rural development. That such programs often actually negatively affected women has been well-documented. In addition to legitimizing women's inclusion in development and creating WID as a separate entity, the abundance of research on women's productivity and potential had another

dubious consequence. When WID became its own field it led to the creation of a cadre of WID experts, usually women but always Westerners. These experts, under the tutelage of their male counterparts, travelled, evaluated and reported back. The early academic research on women was added to by practitioner research. The combination of the two led to misconceptions about women and over-simplified explanations of their situations, particularly in relationship to men.

> Much of the early WID research...focused on the disparity and separateness of male and female spheres, also in agricultural production. Within these parameters production was irrevocably separated: men produced cash crops, women produced food or subsistence crops....Stress was placed on the importance of women's food crop production for household welfare, and the deterioration this sector was experiencing with planners concentration on cash crop production (Geisler, 1993).

It was assumed, then, that given the opportunity to participate in cash crop production that men had, women would benefit accordingly. What women's increased productivity often led to, however, was increased benefits for men. So while women were working harder, their economic situation did not improve.

In addition to the misperception of women's control over increased wealth from greater production, was the ever-present conception of women as primarily wives and mothers; a misperception in most cases. This perception next led to WID programs focussing on health, nutrition, family planning and literacy. The latter being linked to all kinds of

positive outcomes. These activities can be categorized under the basic needs approach, one idea which resulted from a discrediting of growth theory. The basic needs approach to development simply stated:

> ... is a reminder that the objective of the development effort is to provide all human beings with the **opportunity** for a full life. However a "full life" is interpreted, the opportunity for achieving it presupposes meeting basic needs (Streeten, 1981).

However, this development approach was soon criticized for being unrealistic in terms of cost as well as the process by which it would be determined what basic needs are. Since these kinds of programs must be on-going, few donor agencies were willing to fund them. In other words the need for basic medical care, for example, will never end. While training local health care providers reduces cost, the maintenance of clinics requires permanent funding.

A later WID strategy has been the income-generation project (IGP). This strategy quickly became quite popular and in spite of much research about their lack of success, IGPs continue to be popular women's project with many donor agencies. It is difficult to see how feminist notions informed this particular strategy as almost all IGPs have women learning typically female handicrafts and encourage working from home. This strategy is largely responsible for what has been called the "domestication of Third World women". Although husbands are removed from the process (and therefore, potentially have less access to the income) since

women can sell their own products, the lack of markets for the crafts has led one participant to call them "income reducing projects".

The failure of various WID strategies, both the efficiency oriented and basic needs approach ones, are related to the lack of challenge to the status quo. The response to that has been the empowerment approach. Like the early equity approach, it is a call for radical change. The difference is who made the call.

> The realization that development, social and economic crisis, and the subordination of women were inextricably interconnected led to the call for "Another Development with Women" supported mainly by Third World women activities....Unlike the WID movement, it is not concerned with increasing women's status within the framework of existing development, but with an empowerment of women to decide over their lives and to control crucial resources (Geisler, p 1973).

If we continue with the theme that feminist theories inform WID practices, surely this approach can be attributed to Third World feminist ideas. Coming from the Third World itself, surely it is the type of approach that practitioners and funders should be most interested in. Calling as it does for radical change and change outside the existing framework, its future, however is most likely reliant solely on Third World women themselves; and, any real allies they might have.

When examining the problems inherent in WID, it is important to remember that it is but a part of what has become known as the development industry. So, what may have

started as a critique, has been coopted by the system it was critiquing. Although WID has gone through a series of re-conceptualization, each new idea has been toned down so as not to be any real challenge to that system. The best example of this is the equity approach that disappeared before it began.

> If they existed, such aims did fall by the wayside in the process of bureaucratization. Equity programs were clearly rejected by development agencies and developing countries alike because they intended to meet not only practical but also strategic gender needs, whose success depended on am implicit redistribution of power in favor of women (Ibid, p 1968).

The response to this very early idea should have served as a warning. Instead the "woman problem" continued to be examined and worked on; but, only from within the general development framework. And so, from WID to WAD to GAD, the situation for women in underdeveloped countries has not markedly improved and in some places has even worsened. The following was part of the editorial for Sage magazine's special issue on rural Africa:

> ...the (Women's) Decade was a time when aid donors readily funded social programs and invested in human resources. For an all-too-brief moment, the distinctive needs of women and children moved from the periphery to the center of the development agenda....A vast array of WID training programs, literacy classes, and income-generating projects catered to women in urban and rural areas alike....Despite this flurry of activity, the overwhelming majority of African women reaped few if any sustained benefits from the Women's Decade (Robinson, 1990).

This pessimistic conclusion is not an indictment of WID practitioners but rather of the constraints within which they must work. Before going on to discuss some of those constraints, a more optimistic stance is taken by a South African medical doctor and scholar. Her optimistic view, however, is not so much based on faith in WID as it is on faith in women. Her call, it seems, is to listen to women and believe in their self-knowledge. Speaking about any rural development involving women, she says:

> The challenges stem from the position of women, Black women in particular, at the bottom of the power hierarchy in South Africa.... The potential for radical social transformation is considerable under such conditions, but the risks entailed are high, particularly at the interpersonal level. The rewards are numerous because of the interconnectedness of women's roles in society. Empowered women are unstoppable. But the process of empowerment has to occur at their pace, and on their terms, because they are the ones who should make the choice to take risks in transformation of their social relations (Ramphele, 1990).

That this common sense observation is actually quite radical when compared to most development, including WID, ideas about how to interact with African women, really gets to the essence of the problem.

Some of the constraints to WID have been touched on above but the major one is simply that, like development as a whole, it fails to attack the root cause of underdevelopment. While Third World men play a role in the low economic status of Third World women, it is their joint oppression and manipulation as citizens of poor countries

which is the root cause of the problem. As long as rich countries continue to exploit poor ones, WID programs will make little difference in Third World women's lives.

> Development in the Third World is conditional on the well-being of the industrial countries and their economies....The assumption that women's issues can be dealt with in a special women's sector separate from crucial economic problems is a gross distortion (Swantz, 1987).

This leads to the second major constraint, the marginality of WID itself. The low level of funding that WID programs, within larger agencies receive, is evidence of that. The fact that women generally sit at Women's Desks and are, along with their programs, vulnerable in a male dominated field adds to the problem. Much of their time and energy goes to advocating for themselves as a group of professionals and educating their male counterparts about gender issues (Maguire, 1984). How can these women professionals stay focused on women in underdeveloped countries, when their own situation is so insecure? And isn't trying to secure that position somewhat in contradiction to helping women in Third World countries?

A related constraint is what I call the split personality of WID. The fact that it has become both a professional field and an academic discipline is problematic. What are the qualifications of the theorists who often inform the practice of the professionals? What would happen if the practitioners (particularly those at higher decision-making and policy-setting levels) had the

time and resources to do their own research? Much of what Third World women scholars are attacking as WID writing, is actually the writing of academics from field experiences as short as two weeks.

That WID professionals are part of a larger system and are often misrepresented by WID scholars causes tension between them and the women they are supposed to be working with. Although it is the system that is mistrusted and not necessarily individual women working within it, the problem is very real. In the same editorial cited above, the writer says, "In the process, WID scholars and WID professionals made careers for themselves and became experts in the field" (Robinson, p 2). This tension is one that WID professionals have to take initiative to address both among themselves and in international fora. Interacting with Third World women's organizations, and not just the state endorsed, international branch, or "feminist" ones would be a good place to start.

Women's Organizations

Women's organizations, like feminism and WID, have gone through an evolution of sorts. In this section, I will be speaking primarily about southern Africa, although most of the literature on women's organizations in Africa is based on research from the West Coast countries and Kenya.

In the region under study, as is true in much of the world, women and men have always had specific roles and

responsibilities. It is largely this sex-based division of labor and roles which bring women together. So, informal associations of women have a long tradition. In many parts of the world, women still gather to perform the same tasks that their grandmothers did. Tasks like fetching water and wood, pounding grain, gathering wild fruits, weeding crops and assisting with births still bring women together (Johnson, 1980; March & Taqqu, 1982).

In the past, having so much responsibility for family subsistence gave women a certain kind of power as well (Pala, 1976). Through their shared activities and power, women developed something of a women's culture. They expressed their thoughts, feelings and problems to one another about things and in ways they could not or would not with menfolks. Although these interactions are not as well-studied as men's gatherings, which are considered public and political, women's informal association with one another were important to themselves and to family and community maintenance.

In some societies, women also had formal associations. These were usually for religious and/or educational purposes. Through these associations, women performed specific religious rituals, maintained social control and passed on important knowledge (O'Barr, 1982). In these traditional societies women also sometimes had market associations which were very formal (Johnson, 1986). All

these early associations were indigenous creations and served women's various needs in pre-colonial societies. In a discussion on the danger of Westernizing African educational systems, one writer reminds us of the history and power of those associations, as well as the irony of Westerners always thinking their own ideas are new discoveries. She says:

> Another point to be made in connection with the discussion of the possible elimination of sex-role distinctions concerns the strength of same-sex solidarity in African traditions and in contemporary life. Africa is a continent on which same-sex associations (i.e., sodalities, guilds, age-grades, and the like) have a long history and a thriving existence. Interestingly, Western women's liberation movements are just now seeking to create the sense of solidarity that can sustain women's associations of the type that have always been a feature of African life (Sudarkasa, 1982).

Women's responsibility for home, family and community has always been large and multi-faceted. But major societal changes brought about by events like colonialism and the introduction of Christianity affected women's lives in ways never before imagined. As women's lives changed, women's needs changed and one response to those changing needs was the greater formalization of women's associations with one another. Thus, many of the women's organizations in Zimbabwe today were started during that time or are modeled on groups that were.

Colonialism had one main aim: capitalist expansion. In other words, claiming additional territory was not enough on its own. Gaining territory which would somehow be of

economic benefit, directly or indirectly, to the country which claimed it was the real goal. Because colonialism was about economic expansion, it was limited to the world of men. In those times economics was a strictly male purview. Therefore, women were nowhere in the equation except in their relationship to men. So women were doubly oppressed under colonialism (Weiss, 1986b).

Women in colonized societies were viewed as 'beasts of burden' at the mercy of lazy men. This view of the African woman as being in need of rescue is one of many examples of the shared values of European colonialists, capitalists and missionaries. Their supposed desire to "uplift the natives" materially and socially was a convenient excuse for many things including forced social change (Guy, 1990). Women's associations created during colonialism's early days were, therefore, part of a larger plan. Viewed in that larger context then, it is logical that they were in fact formed to make Victorian housewives and mothers of African women. The white women who founded those early associations were given the task of passing on the patriarchal societal values under which they lived to the African women they worked with.

Virtually all of those early associations were Christian, that is, related to a church. Usually the head of the organization was the missionary-pastor's wife. Since in its earliest days, most church members were the young students at the mission schools, young girls were the first

target of these missionary wives. The main purpose, in fact, of allowing girls to be schooled at all (beyond the primary level) was to prepare Christian wives for the young African men at the mission schools. Therefore, early "secondary" education for African women was home economics in the most literal sense (Meintjes, 1990 and Hughes, 1990). The emphasis of their study was almost exclusively on absorbing the morals and values of their teachers and learning the outward signs of those supposed virtues. Some of those signs were ridiculous in the extreme. For example, there was much emphasis on building square houses instead of the traditional round ones.

Once the young women graduated from school and married, they advanced to the women's organization, usually known as mother's unions or clubs. There the indoctrination continued, although some of it was from the women themselves. However, here the emphasis moved from the practical to the spiritual. As it was assumed that one by this time understood and played her wife and mother role well, the focus was on prayer, singing, Bible study and church service. It wasn't long before African women began to take over those groups and make them their own (Gaitskell, 1982). What these organizations did was to allow women an opportunity to gather together and to have a voice. All the social upheaval caused by colonialism had stripped women of many of their former opportunities to socialize, support,

educate and participate. These church organizations gave them a new way to do those things in a manner that was acceptable and respectable. This very likely explains their popularity. Women, for example, had always had responsibility for teaching young girls how to be good wives and mothers. Now in their new life, on the mission station, they could once again do that and they did so with gusto (Meintjes, 1990 and Gaitskell, 1990). Many a mother was publicly chastised for not raising a child in the proper way (Gaitskell, 1982). The communal child-rearing of traditional society, once again had a place; albeit a different one. These organizations, in other words, legitimized women being intimately involved in one another's lives as they had been with neighbors previously. The negative effects of modernization, urbanization and male migration were somewhat muted by these church-based women's groups.

As African women came to realize the value of their organizations, they naturally wanted more control over them. This desire was not met with pleasure by the missionary wives or the few single women missionaries who were also, and ironically, involved in leading the mother's unions. Conflict developed and lasted over many years. One lady missionary lamented:

> Another pressing problem almost anywhere in Africa is the question of women leaders. When all allowances have been made for the fact that formal education for women in Africa is far behind that of men and that therefore the number of reliable, educated leaders is necessarily small, we are

> still left with the problem of why in so many cases even women who have undergone training, such as Jeanes' teachers' wives, or selected women who have attended courses on mission stations, prove so inadequate to their task and seem to lack that authority necessary for effective leadership (Holding, 1942).

However, the sheer size of the movement won the argument. Just as the missionaries were unable to head all the churches they founded without the help of African men, their wives were unable to lead all the women's groups that were springing up. In the remote rural areas, just as unordained catechists led churches, their wives led the women's groups. The missionaries were forced to use their own brand of indirect rule. However, in urban areas and on the main mission stations, white women were not willing to relinquish control without a fight.

By the time the various struggles for independence in Southern Africa began in earnest, in the 1940s and 50s, a large cadre of women had learned valuable skills from those early Christian women's organizations (March & Taqqu, 1982). The role that various churches played in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle are too complex to go into here. However, the part that women played and the changes in gender roles during the struggle greatly and uniquely affected Zimbabwean women's post-war expectations (Bond-Stewart, 1987). Those expectations were the impetus for many of the new secular women's organizations born in the early eighties.

It is important to note that in spite of the many changes brought about by independence, those Christian women's organizations born under colonialism were still intact in 1980 as well. And today, they are as popular as ever. Added to those, are many new and different Christian women's organizations created at and since independence. For church women too were involved in and changed by the struggle for liberation. Additionally, many organizations that are not explicitly Christian are in fact led by Christian women.

There is one last type of women's organization in Southern Africa, that while in a class of its own, needs to be mentioned because of the power they wield. Those are the state-sanctioned women's organizations that are part of each ruling party in most African nations. These organizations, however, have only marginal connection to the grassroots women's movement in Africa in which this study is grounded. Speaking on Zambia, for example, one writer says:

> The Women's League has never endeavoured to be the mass organization of Zambian women it purports to be. It reflects the gaps between rural and urban, educated and uneducated, older and younger, married and single women in Zambia. Furthermore the League was directed by the dominant male bureaucracy into an effective instrument to deepen and broaden the gaps and spur on the 'war between women', thus preventing a 'war between the sexes' (Geisler, 1987).

While I would not go along with a wholesale condemnation of these organizations and their leadership, they are distinct and problematic enough to be discussed separately.

Like the Zambian Women's League the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs in Zimbabwe cannot claim to be representative of the country's masses of women. It is a perceived to be an elitist organization both in terms of its staff and its role. Also, and more importantly, it is in a perpetual state of contradiction between supporting the government and supporting women. While it can support some Zimbabwean women's interests, it certainly cannot support them all without being in conflict with the government of which it is part. One writer gives two illuminating examples of this contradiction.

> ...the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs was instrumental in organising demonstrations to congratulate the government, of which it was part, for passing the (LAMA) act. This action pointed to the way the ministry viewed itself in relation to the other ministries and to the supposedly socialist government. The ministry assigned itself a spectator role reminiscent of women in dependent situations expressing admiration for the men they depended on (Gaidzanwa, 1992).

Yet, when in 1983 the government began randomly and widely arresting unaccompanied women in downtown Harare for prostitution, the Ministry remained silent. While other women's and church groups rallied to women's defense, women's own ministry remained uninvolved. When challenged:

> a ministry spokeswoman said that it would be improper for the ministry to criticise a government of which it was part and in any case, the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs had not been consulted about its opinions on the round ups prior to their being mounted (Ibid, pp 115 - 116).

These type of women's organizations are clearly constrained by the fact that they are beholden, for their very existence, on the male-dominated governments of their respective countries. Their actions have led to mistrust by non-elite women who see the class bias and even sexism these groups are enmeshed in. Their main significance to a study of women's organizations, perhaps is that they have siphoned off some of the most talented African women and ultimately co-opted their power into elitist male hands (McFadden, 1990 and Geisler, 1987).

There were three particular studies I came across in my literature review that deserve special discussion because of their particular relevance to my own work. The first was Audrey Wipper's which draws mainly from her experience in Kenya. She begins by dividing women's groups into four broad categories. Those are: rural coops and self-help groups; occupational associations; urban business enterprises; and, lastly, social welfare, church and entertainment groups. This is a strange categorization method since, for example, it implies that rural coops are not business enterprises. Is this because they are in rural areas and rural women cannot be businesswomen. She also separates out occupational associations and then goes on to describe their functions as primarily social welfare and entertainment. Yet entertainment is lumped with what seem to be far more substantial endeavors.

Secondly, the writer makes an early distinction between indigenous and "Western-sponsored" organizations and them excludes the latter from her study. She dismisses them after making what is surely a false, or at least over-simplified, differentiation. Wipper included the YWCA in the "Western-sponsored" group, yet in my study I found no significant difference between it and the other groups. I find it hard to believe that the situation is so different in Kenya and the fact that she admittedly generalizes her work in Kenya to discuss women's associations in Africa makes her accountable to other accuracy about other countries.

Wipper's main point, however, I do agree with and that is that women's organizations play a variety of important roles. She writes:

> The many women's groups amply demonstrate that present-day African women, as in the past, have the ability to take collective action to solve their various problems. Work groups are used today as they were in the past to lighten the farm chores of individual women. They have also been put to new uses such as working together for wages. With the money they earn, poor women can buy shares in businesses and farms, thus acquiring a stake in the modern economy. Other types of rural self-help groups have made important contributions to development projects (Wipper, 1984).

I find it a contradiction that Wipper does not critique or analyze either "the modern economy" or "development projects" but then ends with a caution about the "ever-present danger" of, presumably African, male politicians "diverting" women's organizations to serve their own

interests. Why men who control the international economy and development industry are not a threat is unclear to me. Is it perhaps because they are not African and only African men take advantage of African women?

The second study, though not drawn from Africa, was helpful in making connections between regional and even international events on the formation and focus of local women's organizations. The author, Sally Yudelman, discusses how two events led to the formation of many new women's organizations in the Caribbean and Latin America as well as to a change within many older organizations. Those events were the meeting in Mexico City in 1975 which launched the UN Decade for Women and the Catholic Bishop's Conference in Medellin in 1968.

While the impact of the UN conference was international, that of the Bishop's conference was regional; but no less important. While not dealing exclusively, or even explicitly with women's lives and issues, the statements that came out of the Bishop's conference were at least as radical as those of the UN women's conference. The Bishop's statement did attack both political and economic institutions for their role in the oppression of poor people.

> The bishops declared that the poor were oppressed by the "institutionalized violence of internal and external colonial structures. They excoriated both communism and capitalism as models of development and criticized "the developmentalists and technocrats for

> emphasizing economic progress at the cost of the social well-being of the majority" (Yudelman, 1987).

The Bishops further called for increased participation in politics and government by grassroots people. Many priests and nuns responded with enthusiasm to the call to work with the poor in their struggle against the establishment. The author contends, and rightly so, that although the Bishops did not include women's liberation specifically in their call, women's lives were changed because of the work that followed.

> Although the bishops' call for liberation, radical as it was, did not envision a new role for women....it had an important impact on them. As a result of the pioneer work of Brazil's Paulo Freire, which grew out of Vatican II and strongly influenced the Medellin conference, thousands of poor women participated in literacy and other types of consciousness-raising (conscientizacion) programs which led them to question the conditions in which they lived. It was a natural next step for them to question their status as women. Thus, in many places, the Plan of Action and proposals generated by the 1975 women's year conference fell on already fertile ground (Ibid, pp 5 - 6).

According to Yudelman, the UN conference led to both "clarified women's research and action agendas" and to two different approaches to carrying the agendas out. She includes women's organizations along with projects as the action part of the agenda. The two approaches are termed the family-centered approach and the woman-centered approach. When she goes on to describe them, however, they could also be called the basic needs approach and the efficiency approach. The author claims that in Latin America the woman-

centered approach was adopted by the new women's organizations that were founded following the conference.

In her study, the woman-centered approach is considered feminist and portrayed such that it is seen as preferable. In addition to the new organizations which started with this approach, older ones which adopted it are seemingly lauded.

> Some old-line organizations, influenced by the World Plan of Action, also began to shift from a social welfare to a development orientation, from a family-centered approach to a women-centered one. A strengthening of the data base on women contributed to this shift, as **women** researchers began to challenge traditional methodologies and concepts. Their studies revealing the **true** circumstances of poor women...(my emphasis; Ibid, p 10).

The analysis in this study is minimal. There is virtually no discussion of the national or international economic and political systems which have had more of an effect than the UN women's conference on women's lives around the world. Also, the author applauds Latin American and Caribbean women's adoption of the women-centered approach without examining the production-oriented development models that approach is replicating. The value of the study, however, cannot be diminished. For its strength lies in the case studies themselves; which probably provide a more true revelation of women's lives than the data alluded to above.

The third study is concerned with facilitating a better understanding of women's organizations in light of the fact

that working with, or through them, has become another popular solution to the "woman problem". As was mentioned above, beginning with the first UN Women's Conference and throughout the decade that followed, many women's organizations were founded, particularly in the Third World. It was believed that these groups held much promise for assisting WID efforts, for empowering women, for facilitating regional and international networking among women and other positive changes. However,

> ...this high expectation of women's groups' potential is founded on superficial understanding. Common development agency knowledge about these groups are fraught with miscommunication and cross-purposes. Neither have feminists given much consideration to the complexities of women's organizations, their purposes, problems, and meanings (Solomon, 1990).

The author poses some important questions about working with women's organizations, particularly for Westerners working in Africa.

The study first explores "how the way we "see" organizations influences how we work with them and create them" (Ibid, p 1). This may seem contradictory; for how can we create something that already exists? But, outside funding agencies and their "experts" can certainly re-create an already existing organization directly or indirectly, deliberately or inadvertently simply by intervening. When outside resources are brought into an organization, a power dynamic is created which often means that even suggestions feel like demands; and, have the same effect.

The writer next implores the reader to "view women's organizations from **multiple** perspectives" (Ibid). The last part of the paper is a discussion of four different ways of viewing women and how those views are used in analyzing women's organizations. The four ways of seeing women that are discussed include: woman's sphere and woman's power; gender-class relationships; ideology and consciousness; and, women's voices.

The first viewpoint has to do with the debate between the private and public spheres that resulted from "the formulation of the "public/private dichotomy" by Rosaldo and Lamphere in their 1974 collection of anthropological studies of women". This dichotomy was widely accepted and used to analyze a variety of women's issues including their involvement (or lack of involvement) in development. Others, however, challenged the dichotomy because it assumed that the power of the public sector is automatically and always greater than the private. Another challenge was if, in fact, such a dichotomy reflects reality. This way of seeing women leads to analyses of women's organizations that are concerned with whether or not they assist women in moving into the public sphere; or in attempting to illustrate how women do have power through their involvement in the private sphere. Studies proposing that women's so-called informal associations are often a source of real power for women would be an example of analyses based on this view. On the

other hand, those researchers in this group who challenge the dichotomy's validity, would question accepted definitions of power, public and private in their studies.

The second perspective, the gender-class view of women, offers a critique of capitalism and its effect on women.

> Central to this way of seeing are concepts of relations of production originating with and adapted from Marxian thought. Heavy emphasis is laid on economic factors as determinants of social and cultural aspects of life, as well as on the historical context of current societal conditions. One aspect of this viewpoint focuses on how colonialism and the development of capitalism have affected women's role in production (Ibid, p 18).

In addition to studies from this view which use Marxist concepts, are those which move beyond economic analysis to an economic and social one. Examples of such studies are those that focus on the relationship of formal education to class. Their writers argue that education affects women differently than men and in some cases leaves women worse off rather than in better circumstances. Also that the class divisions caused by completing various levels of education can negatively affect the way women relate to one another. Obviously this type of view could have much to offer to the analysis of women's organizations because "the gender-class perspective focuses on the breakdown of indigenous patterns of women's solidarity based on kinship and age...." (Ibid, pp 23 -24) and raises questions about women's shifting alliance based on class becoming predominant over gender.

The third perspective, ideology and consciousness, is different from the first two. Rather than focussing primarily on economic, political or social systems, it focusses on ideas. Analysts using this model understand...

> ...the importance of ideas in interplay with material realities in perpetuating social structures and ways of being. This perspective sees world views and social ideologies as determining factors in the maintenance of sexual hierarchy and women's position, roles, and power (Ibid, p 26).

Among other things, this view has informed studies on women's resistance, as well as how they use negotiation, and even accommodation, to their benefit. This view also supports the idea that there are different types of consciousness. The importance of this view in analyzing women's organizations is that it helps us recognize that differences in world view and consciousness means groups organize for different reasons, not just different purposes.

The last view of women was most appealing to me. The writer starts by stating that the women's voices perspective "is not a separate viewpoint so much as a direct outgrowth of the implications of the ideology and consciousness way of seeing" (Ibid, p 33). The women's voices perspective posits that the most important aspect of much research not just on women's organizations but on women themselves is often omitted. That missing piece is women's own viewpoint. How women see themselves, their situations and their organizations is seemingly unimportant.

The author suggests that one reason for ignoring women's "self view" is the difficulty of outside researchers seeing from an African women's point of view. It may be more true that researchers have been trained to ask what and not why. In other words, any meaning gleaned from a study is the researcher's to make. The meaning made by those being studied is most often left unexplored. Even unintentionally one can fail to hear what is meant by what is said. Since everything we hear goes through our own filter, we begin "understanding" what the informant says even before they finish saying it. Finding a way to listen and observe from a world view different than our own is a critical skill. One which becomes even more crucial when, as in the case of research about African women, the findings reported will inform policy that will in turn have a real-life effect on people.

The concept of the women's voice view is important to understand before reading the case studies in Chapter Five. The reader needs to change filters or risk falling into the trap of "understanding" Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe in a way totally different than how the women involved understand them. It is perfectly legitimate to have a different perspective, if one realizes that it is different and recognizes it as an outsider's view. But it is most helpful to look at the organizations from an insider's perspective, as difficult as that might be. This rather

lengthy literature review is an attempt to pull together all the various perspectives which have informed both research and practice on women in Africa, and then to suggest which perspectives would be most helpful in interpreting and using the findings from this particular study. Those perspectives are African feminism and "women's voice".

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE

In order to understand the context in which Christian women's organizations operate today in Zimbabwe, it is important to know the history of the country. In this chapter I will first discuss the general history and then the role the Christian church has played over time. An historical perspective also helps to explain the current status and roles of both women and their organizations, which is the focus of the study.

General History

Early history of Zimbabwe is well-documented and fascinating but its complexity puts it outside the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that:

> ...this was the only region with gold **as well as** other exportable resources, such as ivory, within this zone. Given the limited amount of capital available to either Muslims or the Portuguese before 1700, it would make sense that gold trading offered the highest returns, that mercantile capital preferred to go to the Zimbabwean plateau from about 800 onwards and not to seek the ivory or slaves of inland Kenya and Tanzania, and that **therefore** great states developed around the Zimbabwean plateau and nowhere else in this 1,000 km zone in this early period (Beach, 1994).

The largest groups in present-day Zimbabwe are the Shona and the Ndebele. A brief look at the history of each will serve to give a context for the introduction of the Christian church in Zimbabwe.

From at least 800 AD until the 1800s, the Shona kingdom covered parts of what today is known as Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Botswana. In other words, it stretched from the Indian Ocean to the Kalahari desert. By the 19th century, the Shona still had well-established social, religious, economic and political systems. These systems were also well-integrated and functioning efficiently. At the top was Mwari, the one supreme god. Ordinary human beings had to pass through a series of steps to get to Mwari. Just below Mwari were the vadzimu, that is the group of all the spirits of the dead shona ancestors. Below them were the emperors, who ruled over several states; next were the chiefs; below them were the village headman; and, last were the male heads of household.

Politically, the Shona kingdom was more like a confederation than a federation. It was a series of small loosely federated states. They were held together by two commonalities: religion and language. Probably because those two important social factors were shared, historically there were few civil wars among the Shona. This may also have been because that socio-religious structure was so hierarchical and authoritative (even today it is evident as illustrated by the fact that it is considered extremely improper to disagree with one's parents, for example). The chief ruled only by the will of the vadzimu. Therefore, although above them on the hierarchy, he could not consider himself

separate from the people. Like everyone else, his being disobedient (to social norms or the vadzimu) was equivalent to disobedience to God which leads to damnation. So the religious structure over-layed the political and maintained social control. This all meant that the emperor did not have to fear rebellion. If he tried to gain more power, it meant that he, in fact, lost it all. Rebellion, therefore, was almost always caused by outsiders. By the time the Boers arrived, the Shona had already had experience fighting both the Portuguese and the Ndebele.

The Ndebele entered present-day Zimbabwe in 1840. They came from the South and were fleeing Shaka. They were at first a small group of about 200. To increase their numbers, they conquered parts of northern South Africa, Lesotho and Botswana. They incorporated the young people of the groups they conquered and built a formidable state. A conflict with the Boers there in the Dutch states of Transvaal and Orange Free State led them further north into Zimbabwe.

Ndebele society was one with a clearly defined class system. There was the aristocratic Khumalos, a small ruling class. Next were the other Zulus, called Abezasi, people of the south. Third were other, non-Zulu, Southern Africans like the Lesotho and Tswana. They were called Abenhla. Last were the conquered Zimbabweans, called the Hole.

Politically the Ndebele state was highly centralized and held together by force. Its people had no common

language or religion. It had been built by a series of conquests. These two factors meant its binding ties were weak. To maintain power the king used two strategies. First he made sure that every group was represented in his kraal. Secondly he distributed items produced by others in a way that made it appear as largess provided by the king. This made people beholden to him.

The Ndebele kings also took advantage of the various technical skills brought in by each conquered group. This made the state virtually self-sufficient. However, the king owned all the inputs - land, water, minerals, etc. - so nothing could be produced without his consent and coordination.

As was true in other parts of Africa, Ndebele society was divided into age groups. Only here, each age group was led by a relative of the king. Also, each town or village had a relative, or wife, of the king in residence who gathered information for him. And each town had a military commander from the original Zulu group. The purpose of all these control measures were not only to keep the king in power but to keep out foreigners and foreign ideas.

The Ndebele leadership had to remain firm to protect the fragile alliance that made up their kingdom. Men, for example, were not allowed to marry until after successful military service which usually meant between thirty and thirty-five years of age. Some historians believe one reason

the Ndebele were such fanatical fighters was that the reward for good raiding was early marriage. Raiding, in spite of their economic self-sufficiency, was a way of life for the Ndebele. Capturing cattle was so commonplace that some of their neighbors were actually glad when the whites arrived.

The differences between Shona and Ndebele social and political structures led to differences in the way they responded to whites coming in. In the late 1880s Cecil Rhodes began to send emissaries north to sign treaties with the Ndebele. He told them, untruthfully, that he was representing the British. The first treaty was negotiated by Rev. Moffat and was simply a "friendship" agreement. The second was for mineral rights and was signed in 1888. It came to be known as the "Rudd Concession" named for its negotiator, Charles Rudd. This treaty was important because it led directly to the colonization of Zimbabwe two years later.

The Rudd Commission granted to Rhodes from the Ndebele king the following: mineral rights to Mashonaland; the digging of one mine; and, that the one mine could be exploited by any means necessary to succeed. This last concession was a trick because it was essentially a "blank check". On his side, the treaty granted King Lobengula a steamboat, 100 pounds per month, 1,000 rifles and 100,000 rounds of ammunition. Rhodes registered the British South Africa Company (BSAC) with the British on the strength of

the agreement with Lobengula; asking for and receiving a charter to govern the area.

In 1889 Rhodes returned to Africa from Britain. He amassed a large army with wagons and weapons in Cape town, the infamous Pioneer Column, to implement the Rudd Concession. The army consisted of miners and engineers in addition to soldiers. The trekker-soldiers established forts along the way including in Salisbury (Harare), the current capitol of Zimbabwe. They declared Mashonaland occupied at noon on September 12, 1890 and a commemorative placque remained in Harare until 1980. By the end of the 1890s relations broke down between Rhodes and King Lobengula. This was because once the Pioneer Column disbanded, individuals began to grab the land for mining right up to the Matabeleland border. This broke the part of the treaty stipulating that only one mine was allowed. The Rudd Concession was repudiated by King Lobengula. He sent a delegation to London to fight Rhodes' claims but lost.

The Shona, on the other hand, accepted the presence of the pioneers. They believed the whites would leave quickly as others had done before. Shona actually led them to gold mines because they knew where they were located having mined themselves for many years. Due to the state of their technology, however, the Shona had only been able to go thirty feet down. The pioneers exploited the Shona's knowledge given in friendship and instead of leaving, were

joined by more whites who began coming to Mashonaland from South Africa and Matabeleland. In order to get the Shona to grow food for them, the pioneers imposed taxes. The collection of the unjust taxes led to brutality. The pioneers also seized cattle, in addition to land.

At first the Pioneer Column had avoided Matabeleland but, as mentioned above, once they broke up individuals moved right up to its border. In fact, while Lobengula's representatives were in London, a group of young Ndebele wanted to fight the whites. Their king, however, averted the planned attack. Then in 1893 two events occurred which sparked a war between them. First, the Shona king refused to continue paying tribute to the Ndebele king. The latter decided to use force and crossed the border. The pioneers would not accept that move. Secondly, a group of Shona men stole the Ndebele king's cattle that were grazing near them. They also cut phone lines connecting Harare with South Africa. The Ndebele went north to punish them and the whites accused the Ndebele of actually going to steal the copper from the phone lines. War broke out.

By December of 1893, the Ndebele had been conquered and Rhodes' men were in control of Mashonaland. BSAC now "owned" that land as well, or virtually all of present-day Zimbabwe. Other results of the war were that Rhodes men took two-thirds of the Ndebele cattle (some were sent to South Africa), the Ndebele garrison towns were destroyed, chiefs

were dethroned and army commanders demoted. These three actions, the seizure of land, seizure of cattle and dismantling of the political/military structure meant the destruction of the Ndebele state. At this point the British government did intervene on behalf of the indigenous people. Rhodes was told that when he took over an area, the present and future land usage needs of the Ndebele must be considered. This demand led to the creation of African reserves.

The first two reserves were Shangani and Gwai. Both areas were dry, malaria-infested and rocky. They were large but useless tracts of land. Ndebele who refused to move onto the reserves were considered "squatters". Taxes were imposed on them which forced them into wage labor. The same tactic was used on the Shona. The way the white settlers behaved after winning the war was different than anything the Africans had experienced before. It led to hostile feelings which would last as long as the occupation of their land.

In 1896, Zimbabwe and much of the region around it, was hit by three disasters: drought, locusts and hoof-in-mouth disease. The whites' cattle were vaccinated so their losses were minimal while what little cattle Africans had left were allowed to die. Typically the two groups reacted differently. The Shona felt the gods must be angry and appealed to their ancestors for guidance. The Ndebele prepared for another confrontation and made a surprise raid

on their former capitol resulting in many white casualties in Bulawayo. This was the "first Chimuranga". Interestingly, although the Shona began by falling back on their spiritual beliefs they were the ones who fought the longest. The Shona spirit mediums took a leadership role in the first Chimuranga just as they would in the second or the war for liberation. Under their leadership the Shona groups fought until the spirit mediums died or were captured. The Ndebele, on the other hand, went for negotiation and accepted a political settlement when they felt they could not win and were asked to surrender their weapons.

The British sent in troops at this time to support the white minority. Due to their dependence on African labor, the settlers could not have withstood a protracted war. In 1897, with the help of the British, the settlers claimed rule of Mashonaland again - this time by right of conquest. And in 1898 Rhodesia was formally established as a "white man's colony". Unlike its neighbors, which were protectorates, this set Rhodesia apart. Protectorates' settlers could not rule themselves without British involvement. It should be noted that generally, protectorates became independent African nations without war while colonies gained independence only after war. The designation "white man's colony" was also significant. It signified that the country was to become a permanent home for whites instead of just a place from which to draw

riches. Also, any infrastructure and institutions built by the state were to be primarily for the benefit of whites.

From that point on, in spite of the death of Cecil Rhodes in 1902 and their small numbers, the white settlers in Zimbabwe were able to tighten and maintain control over the African population. In 1907 pass laws were introduced requiring all men over the age of 16 to carry passes. Townships were established to contain African migrant labor who needed to live near white towns to be available for work. By 1914 the white population began increasing rapidly. Due to the good agricultural prospects and people's still strong optimism about mining opportunities, white South Africans continued to move north to Southern Rhodesia. The settlers also began demanding greater self-control.

The white population wanted a parliament with elected leaders rather than those provided by the BSAC. They looked back south to the formation of the Republic in 1910 and took their cues from there. For example, the settlers wanted to have formal exclusive rights to a certain percentage of the land as whites had in South Africa. Many of the transplanted whites were Boers or farmers and not interested in the uncertainty of mining. They wanted to farm commercially and to do so without competition from indigenous farmers. The settlers went to the British privy council and complained. They won out over the BSAC administration. BSAC was given

four years to hand over political and administrative affairs to the white settlers of Rhodesia.

The white population increased again in 1920 when, after the war, demobilized soldiers and other unemployed British immigrants came over to Rhodesia in large numbers. That same year, reserves were established on 42% of the land area and 58% was designated for "European settlement and expansion". However, this was land identification of designation only which meant that Africans still had no compulsion to move. 1922 marked the end of BSAC authority in Southern Rhodesia. Rhodesians were given a choice to become a province of South Africa or to remain alone. They voted eight to seven to become a separate colony. It should be noted that white women could not vote in Rhodesia until 1929.

The Rhodesians were given a constitution by Britain which allowed them to rule itself without British intervention in all things except the following: foreign affairs; negotiating loans on the international market; and, legislation affecting the welfare of the "natives". These three clauses meant Rhodesia was a semi-dominion within the British empire. By 1923 the Rhodesian parliament was in place and its first concern was the 1898 commitment to provide land for African present and future needs. That led eventually to the Land Apportionment Act, enacted in 1930, which made the 42/58 racial split of the land into law. This

meant that Africans now had to live on the reserves. So this first act of the Rhodesian parliament was not done out of concern for the indigenous people. What this law resulted in was gross over-crowding on the reserves and the over-use of land until the already poor soil was totally depleted. Although it was illegal to do so, this lack of arable land led to Africans moving into the urban areas and to much social upheaval.

In the rural areas too, blacks living on "white land" without a pass allowing them to do so were in violation of the law even if they had at some point prior purchased that land. Until the 1950s the only Africans who had passes allowing them to live in white areas were men. They lived in bachelor hostels instead of being allowed to build their own homes. They were in those areas only so long as they were contracted by an employer in the area. Those employers were mostly commercial farmers and mine owners.

Another early act of the Rhodesian parliament was to ensure that Africans could not vote. Prior to 1923 voting rights were non-racial and tied to income and education. Although this precluded many indigenous people, it was not an explicitly racialist policy. But the new parliament instituted a qualified franchise. Only those classified as "workers" could vote and since all Africans were classified as "servants" they were disenfranchised. This classification system allowed other injustices as well. Workers were

protected by rules of the International Labor Organization which meant they, i.e. whites, had a minimum wage and bargaining rights. Blacks did not. The classification also allowed for a dual wage system whereby blacks and whites doing the same jobs could be and were paid different wages.

The qualified franchise was in place until 1959 but even with its abolition only 3,000 Africans were voters by 1960. The educational qualifications which replaced the racial ones kept most Africans locked away from voting rights. At that time, education for whites was free and also compulsory up to age 16. Even college was free so almost all whites were educated.

It would be a mistake to assume that the well-entrenched apartheid system in Southern Rhodesia was acceptable to blacks. Although attempts at armed resistance ceased following the brutal response to the first rebellion, throughout the nineteen twenties and thirties various types of protests against the system were launched. After World War II, however, like Africans all over the continent, Zimbabweans became even more organized and vocal in advocating for their rights. The right to not only participate in the government, by voting, but to lead it as the rightful owners to the land the white settlers had taken over.

Movements for national liberation sprang up all over Africa and independence for most colonies became inevitable

by the mid-nineteen-fifties. In some cases wars were fought, in others a peaceful transition of power took place. In Southern Rhodesia the process leading to majority rule was long and painful. This was due mostly to the large and intransigent settler population there, but also to the incredibly complex situation among the nationalists themselves. Both the settler and the African political situations were heavily influenced by the church, which was involved in a variety of ways. An involvement so intimate, in fact, that it would be most helpful to tell the rest of the story with church and state side-by-side. But first, a look at the early days of the church in Zimbabwe.[1]

Church History

There were Christian missionaries in present-day Zimbabwe in pre-colonial times. The two primary groups were the Catholics and the London Missionary Society (LMS). The LMS was formed by a conglomeration of Protestant denominations in 1795. Just four years later it sent its first missionaries to the African continent. The four arrived at South Africa's cape. From there they moved north working first with the Batswana and later the Kololo and Ndebele of Zimbabwe. The most well-known of the LMS missionaries to go to Zimbabwe was Robert Moffat. He did so in 1857, many years after settling in South Africa in 1825.

[1] Much of the information in the preceding section is from a two-part lecture given by Dr. Patrick Pfukani.

He went north at the urging of his son-in-law, David Livingstone, whom Moffat had recruited into the LMS years earlier. Although not a very successful evangelist, Livingstone was successful at generating enthusiasm and support of missionaries from the constituency back in Great Britain. He was also an organizer and animator among the British missionaries in Africa. Since Livingstone knew his father-in-law had met the Ndebele king, Mzilikazi, years ago, he encouraged Moffat to try making contact with him again.

Moffat's old friendship with Mzilikazi helped him gain access to the king to make his appeal, however "...he also had a number of disadvantages. One was that he lacked Livingstone's respect for African customs" (Weller and Linden, 1984). This may, in a round-about way, have been to his advantage because Moffat's self-confidence and dogged persistence paid off. The missionary tried two strategies in his attempt to reach the king. One was to talk about life after death and the importance of deciding in life one's eternal destiny. Mzilikazi was not interested in this argument and refused to even discuss the inevitability of death. Moffat's other argument however was of more interest. In his second strategy, he discussed the advantages of Christianity in the here and now. As was true with other African rulers, Mzilikazi was won over by the practical rather than the spiritual. But whatever the king's motives,

Moffat got permission to establish missions among both the Kololo and the Ndebele within present-day Zimbabwe.

Due to a rather bizarre series of circumstances the mission to the Kololo was a complete failure leaving most of the party dead. Shortly afterwards the Kololo themselves were wiped out by fever and the Lozi people they and previously conquered. The mission to the Ndebele, in comparison, was a real success and in fact the Inyati Mission in Matabeleland still stands today. But its founders also suffered from much loss of life. It might be helpful to explain the rationale behind the practice which caused the tragedies at both missions.

> It was the policy of the LMS, and of other protestant missionary societies, to send whole families, in spite of the risks involved. The intention was to avoid scandal and loneliness, to provide examples of Christian family life, and to enable work among women and children to be carried out, such as on Roman Catholic missions would be performed by Sisters. Belief in the protection of God's providence sometimes led to the disregard of normal precautions, and the policy, which gave protestant missions a very different character from Roman Catholic ones, was sometimes an expensive one in human life (Ibid, p 17).

As was discussed in the previous section, the Ndebele were actually a conglomeration of peoples who had banned together in flight north from the Zulus. The had not been settled long enough to really be a stable community when the missionaries arrived. There were three distinct ethnic groups living together with the largest group being the Hole who were actually Shona. Perhaps this newly formed and still

fragile alliance is partly responsible for the troubles that followed. King Mzilikazi was desperate to maintain his influence and standing up to the new ideas brought by the missionaries was one way to do so. Although he had invited them in, he disagreed with all of their teachings and instructed his people not to listen to them because:

> ... the gulf that separated the teaching of the missionaries from the practice of the Ndebele was an enormous one. The king's political and religious position, the status of women, the warlike character of the nation - all these were challenged by the missionaries (Ibid, p 19).

In addition, two natural disasters befell the Ndebele at that time - famine and lung sickness of their cattle - which they blamed on the displeasure of the spirits at the missionaries' living among them. So, "it is not the absence of converts which is surprising, so much as the fact that the missionaries were allowed to remain at all. The king's regard for Robert Moffat was a major reason for this..." (Ibid). Perhaps more would have been accomplished had he stayed on as Mzilikazi had originally requested. But instead his son and daughter-in-law, John and Emily, did the work with two other couples and occasional visits from the king's friend. In 1865, three years after the famine, Emily Moffat fell ill and returned with her husband to South Africa. Missionaries Sykes and Thomas continued their efforts and two years later opened a school. It too was a dismal failure. The time was not yet ripe.

> A large number of pupils came on the first day, in response to the king's command that they must "learn the white man's book". On the second day, attendance was smaller, on the third smaller still, and on the fourth it was down to 16. By the third week, the school had disappeared. The time of Africa's thirst for education still lay in the future - for the time being, there was no obvious advantage in going to school (Ibid, p 20).

A year later the king died and missionary Thomas was involved in his son's succession. Participation in politics was forbidden by the LMS and so this led to Thomas' separation from them. However, his former colleague...

> Sykes remained, and was able to give a course of instruction in the Christian Faith to the new king, Lobengula. The nation's religious institutions had, however, played an important part in determining the succession, and this meant that, owing his position to them, Lobengula was even less able than his father to adopt the new religion (Ibid).

This continued lack of progress led the LMS into serious discussions about closing the Ndebele mission, but in the end it was decided to continue. Sykes died in 1887 and after 28 years with the Ndebele had no recorded converts. It was at this time that John Moffat returned to the scene with a new attitude. He was convinced that the Ndebele were worse off than they had been 30 years prior. He believed that the on-going superstition, witchcraft accusations and raiding had caused a fear and depression among the people which led to suicide, murder and flight. He now felt that the only way to reach them would be with the destruction of the Ndebele political structure. That, however, meant replacing it with another political power.

Moffat began visiting the new king, Lonbengula, regularly. However, he was now competing for royal attention with other visitors to the court. Those were the many white settlers, traders and gold miners discussed above in the general history section. In Moffat's opinion the newcomers were another bad influence on the Ndebele. Also, their lifestyle made it difficult for him to link Christianity with Western civilization as he and most missionaries inevitable did. The decision about which political power would eventually usurp the Ndebele royalty proved tragic in the long-run. The choices were the British, the Boers of the Transvaal and the Government of the Cape Colony. Although the LMS were able to persuade the British government to extend its protection over present-day Botswana, the latter were unwilling to take on the additional responsibility of Matabeleland and Mashonaland to the North at that time. The Boers were deemed unsuitable and in fact the LMS tried to agitate both British and South Africa (i.e. the Cape Colony) against their extending any influence outside the Transvaal.

That seemingly left the government of the Cape Colony but, there was another power in Cape Town. And it was that other "government", Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company, which eventually colonized Zimbabwe. Although the story of the Rudd Concession was described above, the missionaries' part in it was not. Juxtapose the two stories and it becomes clear that the church was involved in

Zimbabwean political life for a century prior to independence.

C.D. Helm was an experienced LMS missionary. He accompanied Rudd to Lobengula's court and acted as interpreter and king's advisor. There is debate among scholars as to the extent of Helm's influence over the king and with regard to his true relationship to Rhodes. However, it is agreed that Lobengula trusted him and probably would not have signed the agreement without his counsel. Although the king put Helm on trial, once his duplicity was discovered, and declared he could no longer act as a missionary in Matabeleland, the damage was done. Both to the future of the African people and to the reputation of missionaries in general for years to come.

At the beginning of this section, I stated that the LMS and the Catholics were the first mission groups to work in Zimbabwe. The Catholic story, although different in detail, was very similar to the LMS' which I have described fairly extensively. So I will not give such detail on the Jesuits' efforts. However, two points should be made. First, the Catholics should have fared better and secondly, they came to the same conclusion as Moffat did in the end. The Jesuits should have been more successful because they began with fewer obstacles and unlike the LMS they had much prior experience in the African interior. They had these other advantages as well:

> They had worked among the Zulu, so they knew the language....Furthermore the Jesuits, who had themselves been trained in a harsh school of obedience in their seminaries, had an instinctive affinity with the Zulus and their related tribes, because courage and respect for authority were highly regarded among them. While Moffat tended to equate Christianity and democracy, the Superior of the Jesuits wrote that the Ndebele would make admirable Christians because "they are well trained in obedience and courage" (Ibid, p 25).

It was probably the loss of ten lives without making a single conversion during their ten-year tenure that led the Jesuit leadership to conclude with Moffat that no progress could be made, among the Ndebele or the Shona, while the Ndebele kings were in power. And so the last Father withdrew in 1889 and returned when they did as chaplains to the Pioneer Column the following year.

These stories of the LMS and Jesuits illustrate clearly the reason missionaries are so closely connected to colonialism in the minds of most people. But they should also demonstrate that the church came first, failed, retreated and joined forces with the imperialists out of desperation.

Although early political developments in the country were described in some detail above, here I will add in the church's role in Zimbabwe as it evolved during that same time period. The next era in the country's history is that during which it was under the control of first the British South Africa Company exclusively and later under the settler population's own administration.

Even though part of the Rudd Concession was the provision of arms to King Lobengula, the Ndebele raids of Mashonaland ended with the settlement of whites there. The BSAC administration and the settlers, including most missionaries, however, were not willing to leave the Ndebele king with any power or influence. A well-intentioned reason was put forward publicly; that of protecting the Shona from Ndebele tyranny. But, economics and power were really the prime motivations. The settlers wanted the Ndebele's still vast land and cattle holdings. The administration wanted no political competition. Likewise the church leadership wanted no competition for social control over the African people. With few exceptions, the missionaries supported the attack described as follows:

> The invasion nevertheless took place. In October, 1893, Lobengula's kingdom was invaded, and his troops were defeated in a battle between 18 000 warriors and 1 100 Company volunteers, who thus got their farms and cattle (Ibid, p 203).

The missionaries, however, had no real justification for supporting the attack. As mentioned, the raids on the Shona had virtually ceased with the formation of the white settlements. Also, the various missions had already been given substantial tracks of land by the administration. Those generous gifts even included already-occupied land. Although they gave different reasons for their support, it mattered little to the Africans who, more and more, came to

recognize the missionaries' identification with the settlers as having a priority over solidarity with blacks.

There were a few notable exceptions among the missionaries. The more well-known being Bishop Knight-Bruce, John White, Arthur Shearly Cripps and Archbishop Paget. Other than the Land Apportionment Act, the most significant political move which served to solidify white power was the imposition of the Hut Tax in 1903 and a severe increase in it several years later. The Hut Tax, of course, forced people to leave home and work for wages. This, in fact, was the reason behind it. The creation of a large pool of cheap labor was much more significant than the actual cash raised from the taxes. The missionaries, with few exceptions, supported its passage. As with the 1893 invasion, they gave a different reason for that support than the economic one of the administration and settlers. This time they claimed to go along with the law because they believed Africans could benefit from working for a wage. Missionaries thought that the structure of formalized wage labor was somehow more valuable or "civilized" than the various types of labor involved in traditional rural life. What, perhaps, they did not consider was that this introduction of wage labor to Africans led to the migrant labor phenomena which, in turn, led to the disintegration of the traditional rural way of life and family structure. Or, perhaps, they did foresee these consequences and deem them positive.

Five years later when the discussions began regarding land reserves for Africans, most missionaries did not side with the settlers and BSAC administration. In fact, the Missionary Conference argued that what land had been designated so far should be increased. However, they must not have argued very forcefully because although one reserve was increased in size, another was decreased so that the overall apportionment of land for Africans was one million acres less than it had been; and, the area increased was one with poor quality land.

These two issues illustrate how the missionaries' attempts at intervention on behalf of Africans, though well-intentioned, were both mis-guided and unsuccessful. Most missionaries at that time attempted to keep one foot in both camps, that is to work with the Africans and to be part of the white settler society. Therefore, the advocacy was not always as strong or as straight-forward as it might have been. Additionally, their attitudes were paternalistic. They believed they knew what was best for the African people without really understanding their culture or society.

The first Land Apportionment Act, finally passed in 1931, had other adverse affects on Africans in addition to decreasing their access to arable land. One was that Africans were forbidden to purchase land in urban areas. This combined with the 1937 Native Registration Act, a pass law, effectively turned Rhodesia into an apartheid state.

These measures served to solidify white privilege and illuminate the limited influence of the few white missionary advocates of African rights.

The socio-economic situation for Africans deteriorated steadily during the first 50 years following the settlement of the Pioneer Column. And the role of the church was minimal in facilitating political or economic empowerment for Africans. Its main contribution during that time was in providing social services, that is health care and education, within the confines of a racially segregated society. Few whites within the church were willing to work outside the "establishment" as the settler community became stronger and more independent from British and South African influence. Also during this period, there was not much overt resistance from Africans due to the severe and brutal backlash to the 1897 Chimurenga (rebellion).

Nationalist ideals, however latent, were still alive and expression of them began to re-emerge in the mid-1940s in Zimbabwe. As I stated above, it is also at this point in time that the line between church and state becomes somewhat blurred, as both sides in the conflict are heavily influenced by their own theology. The white minority regime used Christianity in its propaganda.

Also, on the other side, one important role the church played in the various nationalist movements was simply by educating and then providing professional work opportunities

for many Africans. This type of indirect influence was true in much of Africa but particularly in Zimbabwe. A quick look at the religious background of some of the nationalist leaders illustrates the point. Robert Mugabe was mission educated and a devout Catholic. Herbert Chitepo was also mission educated. Ndabaningi Sithole was mission educated, studied at divinity school in the United States and was a minister in the Congregational Church. Joshua Nkomo was a lay preacher in the Methodist Church and his father was a lay preacher employed by the London Missionary Society. Abel Muzorewa was an ordained United Methodist minister who rose to the level of bishop. And President Canaan Banana was a minister and theologian.

Even for those who did not progress beyond primary school, the combination of literacy skills and Bible study allowed many Africans to come to an independent understanding of the Christian faith, and one that was perhaps different than the missionaries had intended. The African reading of the Scriptures led many to a view of Christianity as a liberating religion; one which champions the plight of the poor and oppressed. They saw glaring contradictions between the Bible's teaching about equality and the racially based segregation and discrimination that marked the society in which they lived. That Christianity facilitated the politicization of many Zimbabweans at both leadership and grassroots levels seems clear.

The African National Congress (ANC) was the first of the major nationalist groups in Zimbabwe. It was formed on September 12, 1957. It combined the City Youth League and the African National Congress of Bulawayo into one organization in an attempt to make the former, a group of radical youth, less intimidating to the white Rhodesians. Members of the ANC of Bulawayo were older, educated Africans that would set a more temperate tone for the new group.

> The ANC set out to project a more moderate image than the Youth League to avoid alarming the whites. The central theme of its programme was non-racialism and economic progress; it suggested reform of land allocation and an improvement in the franchise and attacked discriminatory laws. The general tone was cautious (Meredith, 1980).

The person chosen to articulate their moderate platform was Joshua Nkomo. This is not surprising since he was the African chosen by Godfrey Huggins to go to London to show African support for the Federation. A move that alienated all but the elite among Africans from Nkomo for many years. But for those hoping to make change from within the system, Nkomo was the perfect choice and the ANC was very successful in mobilizing support for its platform. As the Rhodesian government continued its unjust treatment of Africans, both urban and rural dwellers responded positively to ANC calls to civil disobedience. Although the way the organization and its membership tried to state its case was moderate, the government's response was harsh. The ANC was banned in February 1959. Although inauspicious, the response below

began the church's direct challenge to the government's actions.

> By now, Joshua Nkomo's African National Congress had achieved a large membership, and this caused alarm among the country's rulers. In March, 1959, the Whitehead Government declared a State of Emergency, and imprisoned a number of leading nationalists without trial. All were black except Guy Clutton-Brock of St Faith's Mission, Rusape. Imprisonment without trial was felt by many to be a breach, not only of democratic principles, but of Christian ones, and this was reflected in a motion proposed when the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Mashonaland met, shortly after the arrests (Ibid, pp 208 - 209).

The motion, however, was so watered down by the time it was eventually voted on and passed that it was meaningless. The voices calling for maintenance of the status quo once again prevailed in the Rhodesian church, which like the rest of Rhodesian society prior to independence, was almost completely segregated. Although the church provided important social services for blacks, and some whites within in it were their main advocates, there was racial discrimination within that institution as well.

In spite of its moderate start and quick repression, the spread of the nationalist movement within Southern Rhodesia was unstoppable. When the ANC was banned most of its leadership were arrested. Those who were not went into exile. Joshua Nkomo was already out of the country at the time of the banning. During his exile, and while the ANC was still banned, another nationalist group emerged. The National Democratic Party, NDP, was formed on January 1,

1960 and from the beginning took a more militant approach than the ANC. Its leadership included Ndabaningi Sithole, Robert Mugabe and Herbert Chitepo. They were reflective of the very elite that the Rhodesian government had previously hoped to lure over to their side following the quashing of the ANC. But the NDP leadership had other ideas. Their platform was simply one-man, one-vote. Negotiation was not on their agenda. However, the group's optimism was based on a inaccurate premise.

It was 1960 and with the imminent gaining of independence for countries all over Africa, the NDP believed they had a right to be optimistic. But they took too much for granted.

> The fatal error the nationalists made was to equate their own situation with that of other British colonies. Although Britain was engaged in the process of decolonization elsewhere in Africa, it had never shown any intention of trying to change the structure of white power in Rhodesia. Indeed, the British government had stood by impervious while the whites consolidated their control. Instead of concentrating on a strong home base, the nationalists relied on international support to win their case (Meredith, p 31).

This reliance on international support and an eventual capitulation by the Rhodesian regime kept the NDP from putting much effort into mobilizing support within Zimbabwe. This lack of attention to the grassroots people was a mistake. And Nkomo eroded the little support they had by agreeing to the proposals for a new Rhodesian constitution in 1961. That constitution gave Africans fifteen out of 65

seats in Parliament, based on new franchise calculations, and formed a multi-racial Constitutional Council. That Council had little real power and the changes in voting laws guaranteed that majority rule would not occur for a very long time.

Others in the NDP clearly saw the consequences of the proposals and protested against Nkomo's support of them, which he later withdrew. Because the proposals were in direct opposition to the party platform, the NDP tried to prevent any Africans from voting in the 1961 elections and the resulting violence led to the banning of the party.

The church too protested the proposals. The Roman Catholic Bishops of Rhodesia made a strong public statement against franchise rules essentially based on misguided ideas of racial superiority. In any case, the constitution became law in 1962.

Almost immediately after the banning of the NDP, another nationalist organization was formed, the Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union (ZAPU). When it was banned in September, 1962 Nkomo was again out of the country. As all its leaders were imprisoned, he knew returning to Rhodesia would mean the same for him. It was Tanzania's new leader, Julius Nyerere, who eventually persuaded the indecisive Nkomo to return to Zimbabwe.

Meanwhile, the Rhodesian government was not responding as expected to the nationalist attempts at disrupting the

country. Various African organizations, including unions and women's groups, tried strikes, marches, protests, petitions and occasionally sabotage. The regime crushed even the most moderate components of the movement and all its activities quickly and decisively. That repression caused the nationalist movement to go through an extended period of some confusion as all their actions seemed ineffectual. Right-wing whites formed their own movement, the Rhodesian Front, and took advantage of the nationalists' disarray and of growing white fear to come to power.

> The remarkable achievement of the Rhodesian Front was that, within a matter of months after its formation in 1962, it managed to consolidate a disparate collection of conservative factions into a single, effective political organization, and to convince enough of the white electorate that not only should they retain permanent control of Rhodesia but that they could (Ibid, p 34).

The Rhodesian Front succeeded in calming the fears of many whites by presenting solid promises and a firm attitude. The party supported many white people's belief that they had a right to rule Rhodesia independent of both British and African input. They reverted to rhetoric about the superiority of white civilization and arguments about that Africans were better off under their care. The party also played to white fears about their fates under African rule and then vowed not to let it come about. The RF painted the nationalists as out of touch and dangerous; with Smith himself claiming that the African chiefs supported him and most Africans supported their chiefs. All this was done with

great calculation and care. They even appeased some liberals by refusing to pass further apartheid laws which were only petty, outward signs of white power anyway. Their campaign was incredibly successful. Once in power, the RF began its relentless move toward total independence from Britain.

> Ian Smith, who became Prime Minister in 1964, represented the country's white supremacists, and in November of the following year, he and his regime declared themselves independent of Britain, claiming that in doing so, they were defending Christian values. With very few exceptions, Church leaders in Zimbabwe announced their opposition to this move (Weller and Linden, 1984).

However, as usual, there was not universal agreement among the church leadership; and other whites, including Christians, did for the most part support the Universal Declaration of Independence, or UDI as it became known. In fact, when the Bulawayo Council of Churches declared its opposition to UDI it lost so many member churches that it had to eventually disband. And if church leadership wasn't already divided enough what happened next finished the job.

When the British Council of Churches declared support for Britain to use force against the Rhodesian Front, if deemed necessary, everyone was forced to take sides. And virtually all Rhodesians sided with the new regime. No one else did, however. No country in the world, including South Africa recognized Rhodesia's illegal independence. However illegal the declaration was though, Britain still refused to intervene forcefully.

> The sense that there was something special about Rhodesia, which made it immune to the ordinary imperatives of history, was reinforced by the British attitude in the late 1960s. Although the labour party government of Harold Wilson was strongly opposed to Smith, it had a thin majority in Parliament at the time, and it ruled out in advance the use of military force to bring the Rhodesians into line. The British public was not about to accept extreme measures to punish their "kith and kin" in southern Africa (Ungar, 1989).

Britain instead used economic sanctions, as did other countries eventually, but one has to wonder if their real lack of action had to do with a secret admiration for the "Rhodies". It is known that in both Britain and the United States, there were informal support groups for the white minority in Rhodesia who depicted themselves as under siege by communists. The sanctions did cause some hardship but the Rhodesians responded to it by working to become even more self-sufficient and over-coming the effects of the sanctions led to greater obstinacy on their part.

While whites were consolidating power within Rhodesia, nationalists were primarily active outside the country. From bases in Zambia and Tanzania, the movement tried to re-group and gain support. This effort was largely influenced by Nkomo who still believed that victory was best pursued by gaining African and international support for their cause. With international condemnation of UDI, Nkomo once again over-estimated the support available to the nationalists. He reasoned that forming an African-led government in exile would offer a legitimate alternative to the UDI.

Nkomo returned to Zimbabwe after extensive travels and convinced the ZAPU leadership that Nyerere agreed with his plan. Although they disagreed with Nkomo and feared leaving the people without leadership, the executive was persuaded by the thought of support from Nyerere. When, upon their arrival, ZAPU learned that neither support for a government in exile nor financial support for the party was not forthcoming from Nyerere or any other African leaders and the Organization of African Unity publicly refused ZAPU further funding, it was clear that Nkomo had to go. Unable to take over ZAPU itself, the other leaders formed their own party. Those at the forefront included Herbert Chitepo, Robert Mugabe and Ndabaningi Sithole. In August of 1963, Sithole formed Zimbabwe African National Union, or ZANU, the party that would be in rivalry with ZAPU long after majority rule.

To get really understand the intimate relationship between church and state, or at least church and politics in Rhodesia, it is necessary to look at what the national council of churches was doing during this time. While organized as an ecumenical religious group rather than a political one, the Christian Council involved itself in politics at its very first meeting, in 1964, when it voted unanimously to pass a resolution, which reads in part:

> We, the Christian Council of Rhodesia, are gravely disturbed at the excessive emphasis on the need for immediate independence for this country and are convinced that this emphasis will not lead to

> unity but to increased bitterness. Our high calling is to do justly, to love mercy and to work humbly with our god and to have dependence upon god and interdependence with our neighbours, our fellow citizens and all the nations of the World (Hallencreutz & Moyo, 1988).

This combination of political opinion and religious beliefs set the organization on high moral ground while exhibiting early on the political acumen of its leadership.

Prior to the work leading up to the establishment of the Council, the Christian church in Zimbabwe was quite divided. This was due in large part to the attitudes and actions of the earlier missionaries which led to intra-denominational rivalry. So the mission of the new Council was to encourage better relations first and foremost. But related to this was a hope that improved church relations would lead to cooperative action. The church leaders involved wanted to understand each other and not only in order to work cooperatively in their developmental and humanitarian activities. They also hoped to collaborate in their evangelistic work, which would mean coming to some theological understanding as well. It is the latter which most likely precluded the involvement of the Catholic church in the Council. There was a range of opinion on how much common ground could be reached in many areas, but the commitment to come together where they could was clearly shared.

That the Council formed when it did was no accident. The country was in serious turmoil by this time. Although

the armed conflict did not begin in earnest until the early seventies and in spite of the chaos within the nationalist movement, the government understood it was a threat. Its hard-line policy toward nationalists also extended to other Africans in an effort to contain the movement. This caused fear and tension in both the white and black community, which was exacerbated by the financial hardships and feelings of isolation brought on by UDI. Throughout the thirties, forties and fifties, the response of the church to what was happening in the country had been inconsistent at best and even added to the confusion at times. The formation of the Council changed that.

Much of the Council's early activity was focused on youth work, urban mission and home and family life education. Two of the church leaders heavily involved with the youth work were Bishop Abel Muzorewa and President Canaan Banana. Obviously, the nationalists were well-represented with the Council. All three focus areas of the Council's early work were practical responses to the real-life daily issues of Zimbabweans. The continuing migration into urban areas caused many social problems which were met head on by the church.

In the rural areas they assisted with drought relief and by helping the families of nationalists who had left the country or were in detention. This work was one reason for the creation of Christian Care. It took over assistance to

detainees, which was putting the Council in danger of being banned and it coordinated its rural development efforts. One last area of involvement for the Council in the early years was education. This included everything from lay training to providing university scholarships.

In terms of politics, while relinquishing its direct involvement with the nationalists to Christian Care, the Council continued voicing opposition to the government.

Although, as became painfully obvious during Council discussions following UDI, and the subsequently mild statement of response it issued, there was obviously still disagreement within the church. The Council, however, provided a place where its leadership could meet privately, discuss issues, come to a consensus and then make a public statement as a united front. This was an important role which gave the church's political opinions, even weak ones, greater power and legitimacy. The government took notice, as did the white populace.

> Church sympathy for the nationalist cause aroused strong resentment among white congregations as well as the government. Priests were frequently told that their duty was to preach the gospel and not to meddle in politics. Indignant letters in the local press blamed communist infiltration as the cause of their disobedience....Ministers nevertheless found Church opposition intensely irritating, the more so since Ian Smith had declared that UDI 'struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilisation and Christianity', a claim Church leaders bluntly repudiated (Meredith, pp 232 - 233).

The Council's outspokenness, however, was matched, or even surpassed by that of the Catholic church. Although the Catholic leadership was much less African than the Protestant, they contributed greatly to the struggle for liberation. Perhaps because of its large and faithful African following, the Catholic church was relentless in its push for justice and equality for blacks. For example, in comparison to the Methodist's African membership of 40,000 and the Anglicans of 150,000 Africans, the Catholic church claimed "by the 1970s more than half a million Africans" (Ibid, p 234).

So it is no wonder that a Catholic "came to symbolize the struggle between Church and State: Bishop Donal Lamont" (Ibid, p 233). Interestingly, Lamont was not radical in his political thinking. His concern was state intervention in what he considered church matters. This included government attempts to institutionalize segregation, to interfere with church work and to deny people basic human rights. These concepts could easily, however, be interpreted as his interfering with the state; and they were. As Lamont became more outspoken, he received much criticism.

> The white community was outraged by Lamont's criticism. Catholics nailed petitions to the door of his cathedral in Umtali demanding that the Church should keep out of politics. In Parliament, he was denounced as "that treacherous and unpatriotic bishop" (Ibid, p 235).

In addition to criticizing the government, Lamont led the work of compiling documentation of its atrocities against

black civilians. He also publicly blamed the government for the struggle becoming a military one.

Getting back to the Christian Council, in addition to issuing statements, the Council made recommendations to the government. Some of the government's actions on which the Council took a strong stand were the new Land Tenure Act of 1970 and the Settlement Proposals of 1972. On these two issues there was unanimous agreement.

While the church had turned to internal cooperation as a way to oppose the minority government during the 1960s, the nationalist movement continued to be divided. Throughout the struggle, there were separate parties, with separate headquarters, leadership and to a certain extent ideologies and methods. However, both of the major parties, ZANU and ZAPU, began to see the necessity of winning the support and assistance of ordinary Africans. They invested a lot of time and effort in talking to rural dwellers particularly about the reasons for their poor living conditions and economic situation. The success of their campaign was tremendous and the support of ordinary Zimbabweans became an integral part of the armed struggle.

> With local support, the guerrillas located safe infiltration routes and suitable spots for arms caches; they recruited hundreds of tribesmen as porters and sent others to Tete for crash courses in guerilla training; older men and women were enlisted supply food. Hundreds of tons of arms and medical supplies were carried across the border and, until late in 1972, the supply columns, on occasions more than one hundred strong, managed to avoid army patrols (Ibid, p 109).

Another important group that was won over by the nationalists were the spirit mediums. In fact, it was the mediums which convinced others to support the guerrillas. For in rural Zimbabwe most people, including Christians, were still believers in these traditional leaders.

While the nationalist movement was gaining support, the government was not standing idle. Once it recognized the level of grassroots participation in the armed struggle, the government began its own campaign. They used intimidation and propaganda to attempt to weaken support for the guerrillas. The military and police issued threats, told lies, closed down schools and clinics, randomly arrested people, and even distributed pictures of dead 'terrorists' along with requests for information. The government's efforts to weaken support and gather intelligence from Africans was due to their realization that its own ability to respond to the nationalist challenge was no longer what it had been in the fifties and early sixties.

While the government was attempting to gain information from blacks, it was simultaneously withholding information from whites. Smith was still unwilling to admit the inevitability of majority rule and consistently promised his constituency that it was not in Rhodesia's future. Most whites wanted to believe this and in the early days dismissed the guerrillas as an annoyance rather than any real threat. Smith was almost too successful in minimizing

the threat because most whites were so unworried that they did not take ordinary precautions. However, once the guerrillas started targeting isolated white farms, their occupants were outraged. Some of the anger was directed at the government.

> 'Why don't the top brass ever tell us anything?' complained one farmer. 'We're the chaps who are getting hit. But we're always the last to be told anything. What we find out, we find out for ourselves' (Ibid, p 111).

As the armed struggled intensified, political negotiating continued and there were several failed attempts at reaching workable arrangements. These included: the detente negotiated primarily by Mark Chona, of Zambia and Vorster of South Africa in 1968; the Lusaka Manifesto in 1969; negotiations between Smith and Muzorewa, then head of the ANC, both before and after the Anglo-Rhodesian Settlement of 1971; the Pretoria Agreement of 1975 negotiated by Henry Kissinger; the Geneva conference presided over by Britain's ambassador to the UN; joint Anglo-American efforts following the election of Jimmy Carter; and the negotiations leading up to the infamous Internal Settlement. Finally there was the Lancaster House Conference which led to independence. This is a brief and simplistic description of what happened in Rhodesian politics between 1969 and 1979. The details are more complex and outside the scope of this paper.

What is important to note is that majority rule came about in Zimbabwe because of a combination of the effects of the armed struggle, the various negotiations, external pressure (particularly the sanctions), and internal pressure from parties rival to the RF and from the church. And it came in spite of Ian Smith, who never negotiated from a sincere willingness to move toward majority rule.

What is also significant is the level of involvement over the long term of a variety of parties. The on-going conflict between Smith and the nationalists had significant implications outside its borders. Which led to Kenneth Kaunda and John Vorster playing major roles throughout the seemingly endless negotiations. Julius Nyerere and Samora Machel were also influential, particularly with the nationalists in exile. The influence of heads of state in the frontline countries was actually more significant that of the United States or Britain. This was due in large part to Britain's own unresolved conflict with Rhodesia. But also because this was essentially a regional conflict.

It is also significant that although women were heavily in both the armed struggle and the political side of the nationalist movement, mention of their contribution is glaringly absent from most books on Zimbabwe. Their contributions are found in books on Zimbabwean women. They include stories of women like Teurai Ropa Nhongo, who was at one time the youngest Cabinet Minister in Zimbabwe. Teurai,

born Joyce Mugari in 1955 joined the struggle at age 18. Her involvement is as impressive as any man's.

> She received basic training before being assigned to field operations, and arrived in Zambia in 1974. In the same year, she became a member of the General Staff of ZANLA and Commander of ZANLA's Women's Detachment when it was formed. A year later, she was moved from Zambia to Mozambique as a political instructor. In 1976, she was made Commander of Mozambique's Chimoi camp, the largest refugee camp in the country. She also met and married the camp's military commander, Rex Nhongo, who is today the head of Zimbabwe's national army (Weiss, 1986).

Unfortunately, it is probably the last statement of the above quote which became most significant in Teurai's military career. For many other women were equally involved without later reaping the rewards of a political career; most likely because they did not marry a powerful man. Interestingly, the author of the book that tells her story refers to her as Mrs. Nhongo, rather than Minister. Rather than discuss the few women who became well known and well placed following involvement in the nationalists struggles, it is important to point out the overall level of ordinary women's involvement. A woman interviewed for the Weiss book had this opinion of that involvement:

> It was the rural woman, the ordinary uneducated woman, who took a lead in the sixties. the women's demonstrations started after our leaders were arrested. When Michael Mawema and the Takawiras were arrested, it was the women who demonstrated. I think women felt not only more oppressed, but also very much more aware of the situation than many men. We came out and demonstrated. We were bitten by dogs. We were beaten up by the police with batons. We suffered all sorts of things (Ibid, p 12).

It is easy to believe her claim that women were more aware. Even women who chose not to be actively involved in politics or the armed struggle were greatly affected by the war. This was particularly true for rural women because not only was that where most of the fighting took place, but also where most of the guerrillas were recruited from. Since many men had already migrated to towns or outside the country for work, this further depleted the male population in the countryside. Villages were often left with only women, children and old men. This greatly increased women's already heavy work load and made them extremely vulnerable to Rhodesian forces when they came through looking for guerrillas and informers. Many women were raped, tortured and killed. Thousands of others were put in so-called protected areas where their chances to eke out a living for their families was further reduced.

> According to Whites, the peasants had asked to be placed under protection from the terrorists' and willing moved into the 'keeps'. Nothing could be further from the truth. Keeps were concentration camps, enclosed by barbed wire and under constant surveillance....Indeed, peasants were removed without warning from their fields, crops and cattle. As a strict curfew was imposed, the long walk to fetch water and wood, and also to look after gardens, proved too much for many women. As a result, food was in short supply (Ibid, p 75).

The armed struggle had severe effects on African women, whether they chose direct involvement or not. But women were involved in the efforts towards political independence from the beginning and willing suffered the consequences of that

involvement right along with men. From the early days of civil disobedience through the armed conflict and political negotiations, women were involved. What is most significant to this study about that involvement is the effect it had on challenging traditional gender roles. The women who survived the long trek to national independence were often making a parallel one towards their own personal independence. It should not then be surprising that women's liberation was expected to be part of the package of national liberation.

The other major point to be drawn from a look at Zimbabwe's history as it relates to this study is that from the moment whites settled in Zimbabwe men were forced to leave their homes for one reason or another. Like women's involvement in the liberation struggle, this process also challenged traditional gender roles. Out of necessity women learned to manage on their own. They managed not only households and families but farms and small businesses. Zimbabwean women learned to survive independent of men because they had to. One major survival strategy was relying on other women. These two results of Zimbabwe's colonization, that is combination women developing personal independence and strong female support networks, are of great significance to this study. Looking at Zimbabwe's history has hopefully helped to explain how and why it happened.

Their political involvement and forced economic independence strengthened women in Zimbabwe. Many gained self-confidence, an independent nature and a political consciousness. These characteristics shaped their expectations, actions and roles following independence.

Similarly, the church in Zimbabwe was strongly influenced by the unique historical and political developments within the country. When speaking of the church at large in Zimbabwe, it too could be characterized as strong, self-confident, independent and political. Following the on-set of majority rule in the country, those characteristics and the church's role in bringing about that new rule, put the institution in a strong position to influence the shape of independent Zimbabwe. So while in the past, events in the country shaped the church, the church has also taken part in shaping the country.

The most important lesson learned from looking at the history of Zimbabwe as it relates to this study is that the church has played an integral role in the country's development and life far and above the realm of religion. Christianity has become the dominant religion in much of Africa. But in Zimbabwe, Christian values permeate society far beyond those members of the population who belong to a Christian church. While a more in-depth examination of civil society in Zimbabwe is outside the scope of this inquiry, the over-arching influence of Christianity in that society

is crucial to understanding the significance of this study of Christian women's organizations.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN CONTEMPORARY ZIMBABWE

In this chapter I will describe the situation in Zimbabwe today to give a context for the study. Like in any country, there are unique aspects of the Zimbabwean social, political, economic and cultural situation. An understanding of that situation is important to grasping the significance of the study. Just as it was clear from the preceding chapter that Zimbabwe's history played a critical role in the way the Christian church developed there, it is clear that the role the church plays today is determined by the contemporary context. The role of Christian women's organizations, as part of the church, must be viewed in light of that context.

General Economic, Political and Social Situation

Zimbabwe currently has a population of approximately eight and a half million people. Seventy percent of them live in rural areas (Mupawaenda, 1990). The majority of the rural population are engaged in agriculture, either on a subsistence level or as wage laborers on commercial farms. Most people's expectations for more and better land following independence have not been met. Some land has been purchased from whites or reclaimed after abandonment and redistributed to blacks, but the process has been slow and many are still struggling on over-crowded, over-used land. The majority of the rural population are women and children,

and life is difficult for them. To supplement their incomes, rural dwellers, especially women, engage in a variety of income-generating activities.

In the urban areas, many of the working adult population, particularly women, are employed in the so-called informal sector. These self-employed individuals are most often involved in street vending of everything from vegetables to hand-knit sweaters. But producing clothing and handicrafts is also popular. Others engage in activities ranging from cross-boarder trading to operating small restaurants or braiding hair, for example. Formal employment opportunities have not grown at a rate equivalent to the growth of job-seekers since independence. Unemployment, especially among youth and women is high. In order to survive economically, there is much movement between the urban and rural areas as families endeavor to piece together an adequate income.

Zimbabwe's economy is more diversified than many in Africa although it is still mostly agriculturally-based. However, the country is also fairly industrialized and produces most of the goods its population needs. Because of the economic sanctions put on Rhodesia during UDI, Zimbabwe became virtually self-sufficient out of necessity. Today, it continues to import much less than many African countries. The country produces not only all essential foodstuffs but shoes, clothing, medicines, household goods and even cars.

Unfortunately, however, most Zimbabweans cannot afford to purchase many of the commodities being produced. Most whites in Zimbabwe live quite comfortably and control of the economy is still firmly in the hands of the minority. However, there is a sizeable black middle-class. It is composed mainly of civil servants and includes a small number of business owners and self-employed professionals.

Politically, Zimbabwe is doing fairly well relative to what is happening in much of the world today. There is peace in the country, it has a multi-party democracy and all citizens have many legal freedoms. The reality, however, is not completely positive. The party which led the country to independence is firmly entrenched and incredibly powerful. Abuse of political power and human rights does occur.

In terms of social development, Zimbabwe has much to be proud of. There are schools and clinics in virtually every village in the country. The large majority of school age children are in school and many of them complete even secondary school. The massive infusion of funds into the school system following independence was successful in bridging the educational gap between blacks and whites. Unfortunately, it did little to bridge the economic gap, as expansion of the school system was much faster than expansion of the economy. Today there is a large body of educated, unemployed young people in Zimbabwe. Since the country's major industry is agriculture, for which the

secondary school leavers were not trained, this is a huge problem. This in turn creates other social problems such as an increase in crime and a mass movement of young people into urban areas or out to neighboring countries in search of employment. One last major social problem is the AIDS epidemic.

AIDS and all the other social problems in Zimbabwe are, however, being actively fought. There is a large and active NGO movement in the country which greatly assists the government in improving life conditions for people. There are literally hundreds of NGOs in Zimbabwe working on every conceivable issue. There is also good co-operation between these organizations. Many Zimbabweans are involved in one or more of these groups and are working diligently and creatively to make positive change. The government too is working to improve social conditions.

Since independence in 1980, three major shifts have occurred in Zimbabwe through government efforts. The first shift was in improving women's legal status in Zimbabwe. Several major laws have been enacted which give women dramatically different rights than they had before. The second was a political shift. It was the merger of two formerly opposing parties, ZANU and ZAPU into one. This move was of critical importance because it ended the dissident movement that had begun at independence and finally brought real peace to the country (with the exception of South

Africa's destabilization activities). The third was an economic shift back to capitalist economic policies. However, this was more a process that a shift. Zimbabwe's economy had never become as socialist as the rhetoric of the new majority government would lead one to believe. Pressure from both white Zimbabweans, who control the economy and from external forces made the reversal of course inevitable. One writer also contends there was pressure from a small segment of black Zimbabweans as well.

> The Zimbabwean government was therefore being pushed into and cooperating with those interests that were powerful in Zimbabwe. These interests were the local and foreign capitalists who paid the taxes necessary for financing the social welfare programmes of the government, the black middle class men and women who wanted to solidify their benefits and access to the valued goods in society. These were the interests that questioned the whole rhetoric of socialism and the social welfare programmes of the government which benefitted poor Zimbabweans and led to high individual income taxes for the bourgeoisie (Gaidzanwa, 1992).

The move toward pure capitalism has recently been further accelerated in response to requirements from the World Bank and IMF, which, by the way, was negotiating from a position of greater than usual strength while southern Africa was suffering from one of the worst droughts in history. It is no surprise that with all the pressure it was under, the Zimbabwean government accepted an Economic Structural Adjustment Program.

All three of these shifts affected and continue to affect Zimbabwean women in major ways. The first shift, that

in women's legal status has had mostly positive effects for women. The changes made illustrate clearly the government's commitment to women in Zimbabwe. The first step was in creating the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs (MCDWA) in April 1981. One of the major aims of the ministry was to "remove customary, social and economic laws that prevented women from fully participating in national development" (Mutambara, 1993, p 3). The four major new laws regarding women are the Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA), the Customary Law and Primary Courts Act, the Matrimonial Causes Act, and the Maintenance Act. The LAMA, passed in 1982, means that women for the first time have the rights of male adults when they reach majority at 18. Previously, women were considered minors all their lives. This meant they could not enter into legal contracts independently. A woman moved from being under her father's guardianship to her husbands' to her sons'. Therefore any legal or business decisions she made could only be legitimized by her male guardian's approval. This meant that women could not, for example, own property, decide whom to marry or even get a passport, without a man's consent. Obviously the passage of LAMA has had major consequences for women, most of them positive. There has, however, been some negative backlash as well as a problem with education and enforcement. Many women are as yet unaware of the law or do not fully understand its

implications for them. Of those who do know and understand what it means, making use of it is not a simple matter.

This lack of effective dissemination about LAMA and enforcement of it is also true with regard to the new inheritance laws under the Matrimonial Causes Act, of 1985, and Inheritance Act. Perhaps even more so. Prior to the enactment of the new inheritance laws, and again due to cultural traditions, Zimbabwean women did not inherit from their husbands upon his death. Regardless of how long they were married, and how much she may have contributed to the family's income, widows did not inherit anything. All of a family's possessions were considered to be the husband's possessions. So on his death everything they owned, regardless of who actually purchased it, went to his family. Widows found themselves stripped of their land, houses and all household goods, and even their children. Originally, a man's brother "inherited" his wife and so it was logical that her home be part of that inheritance. But that tradition developed in a time when brothers lived in close proximity, so possessions were not actually taken away. The brother of the deceased simply assumed responsibility for a second household. Therefore his inheritance had another side to it. In exchange for inheriting the property and goods, he was responsible for the family that came with them.

In modern times, extended families no longer necessarily live in the same community and rarely in the

same compound. What was happening is that the deceased man's relatives would go to his home, sometimes miles away, and strip it bare. In addition to household goods, if the family owned a vehicle or any animals, those too were taken. Since women were also previously unable to have their own savings accounts, even the deceased's cash was taken from the bank by his family. These in-laws may or may not decide to take responsibility for the children and almost never provided support for the widow. Unless a woman was willing to move with her possessions to the home of her new "husband", she was instantly destitute.

The Inheritance Act prevents this and many women have benefitted from it. Men are now encouraged to write wills, but even if they do not the wife is considered the rightful heir. The court can and does enforce the new law. As with the LAMA, some problems are that many women are unaware of the law and others are afraid to use it. Many women, particularly uneducated, rural women, continue to accept the practice of being "inherited" rather than loose everything. Others, often because of religious reasons, refuse to become a second wife through inheritance, but are still afraid to go to court and so have to start all over again with nothing.

In addition to helping widows, the Marital Causes legislation assists divorced women also. They too can now appeal to the courts to receive part of the property

accumulated during the marriage. Also, children no longer always go to the father upon divorce. Women can petition the courts for custody as well.

The Maintenance Act forces non-custodial parents to contribute to the financial support of their children. Previously upon divorce or separation, if a man left his ex-wife with the children he was under no legal obligation to help her support them. That is no longer the case and again the courts do enforce this new law. Obviously, as in this country, enforcement is difficult sometimes. Additionally, there has been a great deal of negative backlash around this particular issue. Some men have accused women of having babies, abandoning their husbands and demanding maintenance as a way to earn money. As ridiculous as it sounds, it is a frequent charge. What the law has really done is allow women more freedom of choice in leaving abusive and otherwise unsatisfactory marriages. Previously, women rarely divorced their husbands and the lack of maintenance was one major reason for that.

While each of these new laws have helped women, they have also hurt them in some ways. As with any major social change, some people are resistant. That resistance has taken many forms and usually is at the expense of women. Some men and even some (especially older) women have spoken out vociferously against the new laws and attempted to prevent women from taking advantage of them. Also, there are still

some areas needing reform and some inconsistencies in the legal system as it affects women.

The second event, the end of the dissident war against Mugabe's government also had a positive effect on women. Since the civil war was essentially fought in the rural areas, women and children were most at risk as they are the majority population in those areas. Many women suffered much physical and psychological abuse during the war for independence. The civil war which followed, although on a much smaller scale, prevented women the stability and peace needed to heal from their trauma.

Additionally, the joining of the two parties also meant that those supporting the loosing side would cease to be discriminated against by the ruling party. This greatly assisted the former combatants, which included women, who were trying to develop co-operatives, farms and other economic activities. Development, particularly in Matabeleland, could now go ahead for all and not just some Zimbabweans.

The further entrenchment of the capitalist economic system has not been good for women since they are unlikely to be involved in that system, except in an exploited role. The changes brought on by the adaptation of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) in particular have been devastating for poor women. Although only a small part of the larger strategy, things like the introduction of school

fees and hospital charges have had major implications for women.

Since traditionally women are responsible for the maintenance of the family, especially children, any increase in household expenses is most keenly felt by them. In addition to the role of tradition, in reality many women are actual or de facto heads of household with complete financial responsibility for their families. The ESAP has so far had no positive impact on women's lives and it may be many years before the citizenry in general experiences any from it.

These are just some of the many changes that have occurred in Zimbabwe's recent years. As is clear, whatever happens is keenly felt by women, either positively or negatively. However, although as politically active and economically productive as men, their power to affect economic and political change is minimal. At least in terms of working through the formal structures, where their presence is still far from representative of their numbers. Women in Zimbabwe have, therefore, had to find other avenues to gain power and make change that will be beneficial to them. The primary mechanism through which women work is women's non-governmental organizations.

The Role of the Church Today

According to both my informants and my observations, the church is a major force in Zimbabwe today. This opinion

was also supported by a daily reading of two major newspapers, listening to the radio, and informal conversations with people throughout the country. The Christian church is actively involved in many important aspects of life, particularly education.

Although the state took control of the schools after independence, some retained their Christian basis. Although the new government had to quickly build a large number of schools to fulfill its promise of basic education for all, the various missions had already established a substantial number of primary and some secondary schools in the country. The government took these over as well, though in some cases they remained private, church-controlled institutions. The missions, by that time, were under local management in many cases and the number of foreign missionaries in the country was relatively small. But in addition to these few Christian schools, the government has allowed foreign teachers from Christian non-governmental organizations to teach in Zimbabwean schools. Also, it is important to remember that most Zimbabwean teachers were raised and educated at mission boarding schools and trained at church-run teacher training colleges. So even with the state-run educational system in place, there is a fairly substantial Christian influence on education in Zimbabwe today.

The same is true in the field of medicine. Prior to independence most hospitals and clinics serving Africans

were mission or church institutions. And although, like the schools, most have been taken over by the Mugabe government, many still have missionary doctors, nurses and instructors. Even those without foreign staff are under strong Christian influence because of the background and training received at mission secondary or nursing schools by the older staff members.

In addition, most of the volunteer work done at hospitals, and it is a substantial contribution, is carried out by members of Christian women's groups. Also, all of the major health-related, social issues in Zimbabwe are of concern to the church. Those include teen pregnancy, abortion, AIDS and the influence of traditional healers for example. All of these are hot topics in Zimbabwe today and the church has been very vocal in the debate and active in the search for solutions.

The church is also very interested in economic development. There seem to be two primary reasons for this. The first is simply that the church has always been, for theological reasons, concerned with the well-being of its members and society in general. The Christian principles of assisting the poor and vulnerable are taken very seriously by the church in Zimbabwe. Secondly, the church leadership recognizes that lack of national development results in just the kind of social problems mentioned above plus others such as unemployment, crime, family disintegration, and wife

abuse. Some of these problems, have reached the level of a crisis in the country already. Although the church recognizes the government's having primary responsibility for national development, it accepts part of that responsibility as well.

That acceptance is demonstrated by the fact that the largest Zimbabwean development organization in the country is a Christian one. Although Christian Care is not a women's organization I interviewed the director because I believe the scope of its work is a good indicator of the important role of the church in general in contributing to national development. He began by describing how the organization was started:

> We were formed in 1967 as a service division of the Zimbabwe Christian Council. That's how it was formed. The idea then was that the Christian Council of Zimbabwe was involved in trying to give assistance to people that were detained (for) political activities. So they realized that, in fact, they were going to be banned or something like that. So they wanted an institution which would not be banned. ...So that's how Christian Care was formed. So it had to...separate from the churches as such. So, we have our own separate constitution. It's a welfare organization (interview transcript, p 1).

Since both the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (formerly known as the Christian Council of Zimbabwe, a name still used by some) and Christian Care were involved in politics during the crucial years of the war for independence, it seems appropriate to interject that here is another illustration of the church's involvement in an important sector of life

in Zimbabwe. Although the nature of the church's political involvement has changed, it is still very apparent. A description of its war-time involvement, however, should demonstrate the strength of its conviction of the appropriateness of contributing to the political life of Zimbabwe whatever the difficulty. The director described that demonstrated commitment:

> ...from 1967 we picked up from those kind of activities, when we were assisting people and the families they left behind and as we, (that is) the liberation movement progressed, we got more involved also in the camps. you know the protected camps. We got involved in providing food and clothing...(Ibid, p 1).

Like many non-governmental organizations, Christian Care moved away from relief work to development activities after independence, decreasing their focus on the former gradually over time. My informant estimates that now only about one-quarter of their activities are relief and that work is mainly with refugees. Other relief work done by Christian Care today is aimed at drought relief. The rest of the organization's focus is on development projects. And within that, the major area of concentration is in agriculture. This is obviously a good complement to the government's sometimes over-emphasis on urban development since the majority of the population live in rural areas. My informant described this area of their programming in detail, the highlights being that:

> ...because of the resource base of the country, we are mainly covering agricultural development as

> such...So, we have programs. We've tried to group our activities into programs; a program being one entity having different projects with the same objective but, designed differently to suit varying circumstances. So, we have programs which are (for) production...we can buy animals, provision of water...The bore holes combine it with sanitation; that is a government requirement.
>
> So, we also involve ourselves in environmental programs. Distribution of trees and also at the same time looking at how we can reduce the destruction of vegetation.
>
> then the production programs...really tries to address constraints that most of the small farmers face....We look at various things. We look at marketing, we look at credit possibilities, we look at vegetation....We have various interventions. Sometimes we can buy for people seeds. It's a kind of credit. They give us, at the end of the season, when they harvest, they pay back to us (Ibid, pp 2-3).

The projects always include an educational component and an expectation that the people involved contribute something towards it. The education could be skills training or raising awareness on a particular issue. Training courses have ranged from environmental education to managerial skills. But some educational work is included in every project or program.

An important part of this education is attempting to change attitudes about self-reliance. It is easy to assume that self-reliance is always understood to be a virtue but, the concept does not translate simply across cultures. It is in fact a complex concept because it is embedded in a particular worldview. But because the church, as my informant explained, is working with ever-shrinking resources, a new way of helping people has had to emerge.

Although those two factors, providing education and fostering self-reliance, are in part what makes the difference between relief and development; making the transition from the former to the latter has been especially difficult for the church. Many people steadfastly view the church as a giver with unlimited resources rather than a facilitator or helper only. And it has not only been a difficult change for the church's constituency to accept but for Christian Care staff as well. This came out when I asked the director about staff development.

> It's not a very easy thing, you know actually, that kind of transition. but we have had to change the mixture of our staff's positions. Usually when we do relief, we want social scientists, social workers; those kind of people. But when you get into development, you have to mix....You want those but, you also want some other skills. So we see that we also need to change. So we recruit some social scientists but they all come with some other skill (Ibid, p 6).

Then after assembling people with diverse backgrounds, they are given on-the-job training. The Christian Care staff development strategy helps staff to move from being technical experts into development generalists. The training includes both practical experience and formal course work. The course work takes place at various institutions including the University of Zimbabwe Training Center for Middle Managers. The practical piece is done in-house as follows:

> Those members of staff participate in every aspect, from initiation of (a) project to implementation to evaluation....You may have a

> social worker being said to be in charge of water, sanitation. So in terms of our staff development we try and expose them...not necessarily becoming a social work expert but having the basics. So that kind of exchange does a lot....Generally also, in community development, you know, there is no specific discipline that covers it...So we have our own program....We allow individuals to develop...within the system (Ibid, pp 6-7).

Although Christian Care has been moving from relief to development, has an innovative staff development program, includes consciousness raising in its work, is appropriately targeting rural development and agriculture, there is one area where they have chosen not to follow the lead of most development organizations. Like the Catholic Church's development organization, Christian Care does not have a separate women's program or desk. When the executive director explained the reasoning behind this decision, his words might have sounded like old-fashioned excuses, except that they echoed the sentiments of some of the women I interviewed. When I asked about women's projects, he responded:

> We don't have specific ones as such....Most of the NGOs have a women's desk. We don't have that. What we're looking at is we don't think it should be different. We think that the awareness, the assistance for women will be done in the context of what we have. So we (are) trying to assist whereby our project initiation (and) the analysis, make (a) deliberate focus on the impact on anybody in the project. What does it mean to them? What are the advantages? We hope that kind of analysis will take care of this and protect the rural areas and those who live there....But we would also observe that the composition of communities is largely women because they are de facto heads of household....they are targets for this kind of

> thing. We take (that) into account but we are not yet having a desk (Ibid, pp 7-8).

The other major player and the parent of Christian Care does, however, have a women's program with its own budget. That organization is the primary representative of the church in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). I interviewed two people there. One was the General Secretary and the other was the Director of the ZCC's Ecumenical Resource and Training Center. Since I discussed the founding and history of the Council in Chapter Three, I will not do so again here. Instead, I will use the words of my two informants, as well as a paper written by a Zimbabwean colleague, to shed further light on the issues of the role the church in development and women in the church.

To begin to get a general sense of the impact of the church in Zimbabwe, I asked the General Secretary what percentage of the population is Christian. He replied:

> The official statistic is 55-60% but I think it's a lot more and the influence of the Christian community in this country is almost 100% in terms of standards and way of life. There is a small percentage of Hindus and Muslims. Anyway we are 100% religious. There are no Marxist-Leninists, no scientific socialists, in spite of the rhetoric. Everyone, all Blacks, are believers in something whether Christian, Muslim or traditionalists (Interview transcript, p 1).

When I asked what the Council is focusing on now, he said: "urban and rural development, women's work and youth work. Two areas we are not doing well in are evangelizing and education" (Ibid). That was a very telling response and

quite surprising because I expected evangelizing to be the Council's primary focus, since I knew Christian Care was supposedly responsible for development work. When I explained that my specific interest was women's involvement in the church, the General Secretary had this to say:

> The church in Zimbabwe is 75-90% women. The Council has restructured from a women's division to sharing women's work in all departments with the World Council of Church's 1988 Decade of the Church in Solidarity with Women which strongly encouraged churches to hire women and worked to help make churches' women's projects economically viable. But the mentality is incredible (Ibid).

Although there is no longer a women's division, there is a women's program within the division of Church and Development. When making the last statement, the General Secretary was referring to the attitudes of some men in the church. Those he referred to as the "chauvinistic faction". He described them as a small but vociferous group and added that there really is no longer "strong anti-woman feeling" in the church. He thinks that:

> No one is actively working to oppress women. Their liberation is to come from themselves. But, it's our cultural set-up that (causes) the women's humility. They must gain confidence to free themselves (Ibid, p 4).

The General Secretary thinks this need for women to take charge of their own liberation is illustrated by the way women still sometimes "oppress each other". By, for example, electing the lone male in a group as leader. This tendency was also mentioned by my informants at the YWCA. The Reverend, however, believes this is also caused by the

historical image of a "spiritual father". Which led me to ask about women clergy in Zimbabwe. He said there are women pastors, particularly in the Methodist and Evangelical Lutheran Churches. And apparently, no Protestant churches oppose women's ordination except some of the African Independent Churches and some of the Anglicans.

Within the ZCC executive staff, however, women's large numbers in the church are accurately reflected.

> Four out of five of the staff management team are women. One is acting and the chauvinists want her replaced with a man so I'm not swallowed up by all those women. Yes, the power base is with them! (Ibid, p 4).

Among its priority areas for the remainder of the decade, listed in "The Church and her Mission" (ZCC, 1993), the ZCC includes: mission and evangelism; justice, peace and reconciliation; drought recovery and sustainable development; business administration and management; and, investments for self-reliance/financial autonomy and employment creation. Under that last one is the sub-heading: Comprehensive and sustainable DIAKONIA through accessibility to fair credit schemes for the marginalized People, Communities and Groups, specifically including women. Also, under "Other identified priorities", the first group of concerns is headed "Women Training and Leadership Development" (ZCC, 1993, pp 11-12).

The organization's commitment to women is not just rhetoric because it was reflected in its budget as well.

Women's programs had Z$2,131,832 (roughly a quarter of a million US dollars) budgeted for 1996 out of a total budget of Z$14,600,751. The only area receiving a larger percentage of the budget was the Personnel Planning and Human Resource Development (which includes the Training Center). This type of planned spending on women's programs for 1996 was similarly reflected in the 1994 and 1995 budgets.

In addition to speaking with the General Secretary at the ZCC, I spoke to its former head of the Women's Division. She is currently heading the ZCC Ecumenical Resource and Training Centre mentioned above. The center has played a critical role in assisting women's participation in development work by providing a variety of formal training opportunities. Although not an exclusively women's program, the training center serves many women and indirectly affects many more.

The training center was opened in 1984 to assist churches in human resource development. Prior to its founding, people were sent overseas for training, which was very expensive. The center's course offerings are under one of two programs, short-term or long-term. Short-term courses last anywhere from a few days to five weeks. Courses available include Learning for Transformation, Project Management, Planning and Management, Leadership, Communication and Training, and Training of Trainers. A new Women in Development course is currently being planned.

Both men and women may participate in the courses and although men out-numbered women at one time, that is no longer the case. There are no academic qualifications for participation. The only requirements are payment of a small registration fee and that one be sent by his or her employing organization or church.

The long-term training program has two course offerings, each lasting fifteen months. Those are church administration and secretarial studies. Both courses require payment of a fee and are income earners for the center. The participants in these courses are often foreigners. They take English-as-a-Second-Language, if needed, for the first three months and then begin the course. Both long-term courses end with a one month internship. Unlike with the short-courses, participants may enroll as individuals rather than being sponsored by an organization. The secretarial course had 89 students enrolled in 1994 and awards a widely-recognized certificate upon completion.

The center has six, full-time paid staff currently. Up until a few years ago there were only two and consultants were used. This caused a problem of commitment and continuity which was resolved by hiring its own professional staff. According to the director, the center has very high expectations of its teaching staff. Courses are constantly evaluated and improved. Although the same material is covered many times over, methods and materials can always

change. Teachers are encouraged to be creative and keep up to date on new training methods. They are assisted in this through ZCC staff development resources. The teachers have a wide variety of backgrounds including Theology, training, business management, sociology, health education, social work and community development.

Some of the training center's problems have to do with its rather lax qualifications for participation. People chose or are chosen to participate in a particular course because its topic is considered important in the participant's work. But that topic could be relevant to people working at a variety of levels. So, participants are often in a class with people from a wide variety of educational backgrounds. This becomes problematic for the trainer who has to make the content meaningful to participants who have had little formal education and may have a low level of literacy, while keeping it interesting for others with some post-secondary education. Also, people come with various levels of English fluency but due to the short nature of the courses, cannot take time for the English class.

Another problem is that participants often show up without having pre-registered. This means that the trainer is not prepared with enough materials or activities appropriate to a larger group. The director believes this is due to Zimbabwean culture. The center sends out invitations

to its courses so that all participants should be pre-registered. However, people know that if they do not respond, they will not be turned away. She thinks that if everyone pre-registered, it would also address the first problem because applicants could be "sifted". She would like to be able to get everyone to respond and respond early so that participants could be placed in groups with others at a similar educational level and some even turned away.

The last problem mentioned is that the center is not yet financially self-sufficient and the director would like for it to be. In addition to course fees and support from the ZCC, they rely on funding from European and Canadian church groups.

The training center is a very valuable resource for the Christian community. It offers training to people at all levels who work for a church or Christian group. Because all its programs are residential, participants are able to focus solely on their training without having to juggle their other responsibilities. All meals and housekeeping are provided by staff. The center is away from the city center and any distractions. This residential aspect is especially important for women. Although it may keep some away, those who do go are allowed to concentrate on their studies fully.

Also, the center is a good place for women to network with other women doing similar work. Since participants are living together they have the time for much informal

interactions where more sharing and learning occurs. Another advantage of the center is that since training no longer means leaving the country, more women are able to participate. Previously, decisions about who received training were made based on who was considered free to go abroad and that usually meant men. Another advantage of the training center is its Christian basis. All participants are Christians and that is taken into consideration in course planning. That common bond facilitates more openness because the situation is considered safe. Even with the educational differences, those who are less academically qualified (usually women) are not intimidated as they might be in a secular training course.

One last advantage of the training center's programs is that participants must be sent by their church or organization. The expectation is that in return for being sponsored, they will go back and use or share what they have learned. This is especially meaningful for women participants who often work at a very grassroots level. Their training can ultimately affect many other women.

The ZCC Ecumenical Resource and Training Centre is one of the Zimbabwean church's greatest resources. Both its director and programs are impressive. That the Council provides it such strong financial support is testament to the leadership's appreciation of the value of education. The center's focus on development related courses is also

significant. The fact that the center is run by a woman, has both women trainers and women participants (in numbers equal to men) and is developing a WID course bodes well for church women's increased participation in the life and work of the church, particularly community development.

In addition to the somewhat autonomous training center, which women are heavily involved in, the ZCC also includes a Women's Training and Development Program in its organizational structure. It was organized in 1971 and in 1993 had five staff members and an advisory council. Its mandate was "the empowerment of women with skills that will enable them to take up equal partnership with men in development and discipleship" (Mutambara, p 5). The department works at three levels: provincial, national and international through a system of sub-councils. It works with women in churches and Christian organizations which are represented by those sub-councils. It is through that mechanism that its provincial work is done.

> The sub-council is the body through which the department co-ordinates its activities with member denominations and associations as well as the channels through which people at grassroots level make an input into the department's program. The members of the sub-council are the implementors of development programs in their denominations (Ibid, p 6).

At the national level the department works "with various government ministries such as Agritex, Justice, Education and the Ministry of Co-operatives Community Development and Women's Affairs" (Ibid, p 7). On an international level its

major contact is the Women's desk of the World Council of Churches. While these various linkages look good on paper, in practice the departmental structure has proven problematic. Two issues of concern are that sub-council members are very part-time volunteers within the ZCC structure (with their primary commitment being to their own particular church or organization), and that the sub-council structure is based on a shaky premise. The premise is that the sub-council members' churches "have structures that help make women's programs viable" (Ibid). This is not always the case.

However, the sub-council structure does have merit. It is a mechanism through which the members can provide insight into the reality of grassroots women's lives and needs to the ZCC Women's department. Therefore, planning is largely guided by women's own assessment of their priority needs and issues. However, the department has been attentive of the government's priorities in development as well. So, state development policies, along with ideas from the UN Decade for Women, have also strongly influenced departmental activities. In broad terms those activities are ones which promote economic development and leadership development.

Specifically, the department's major activities include income-generating projects (IGPs), workshops and the employment of full-time church workers. The latter comes directly from the WCC's Decade of the Church in Solidarity

with Women plan of action and those positions are in fact funded by them. Mutambara, a professor of religion at the University of Zimbabwe, thinks the department's support of IGPs began in response to a 1982 study on women in Zimbabwe that was carried out in preparation for the UN Decade for Women. The study named women's economic reliance on men as a major problem. She concludes, however, that the most IGPs have failed because they have not met the objective of providing economic security for women. Her informants in her own study on the ZCC Women's Department, not surprisingly, took a different view. It is clear that they believe success can be measured in terms other than economic, even with an economic development program. She writes:

> They argue that women's participation in IGPs has increased the self confidence of women and that women are provided with room for self-expression. Knowledge obtained such as in baking and sewing is utilised in the homes of the participants. In addition IGPs have become a social focus for women in winter and in drought periods (Ibid, p 12).

The lack of necessary skills as a major reason for the failure of IGPs to improve women's financial situation is being addressed by the third area of concentration for the Women's Department, training.

The department provides both training coordination and facilitation for the sub-council member's churches or organizations. If their resource persons are not needed, they will also provide funding or space for training sessions. They also work with other organizations to

collaborate on training programs of common interest. In addition to providing training on the technical skills needed for various IGPs, they provide sessions on the business skills needed to succeed. Other areas of focus are legal awareness, economic justice and what they call "economic literacy workshops", and Bible study. This last subject is targeted to pastor's wives and bishop's wives because it is understood that they are the real spiritual leaders of most women. The Bible study does not just look at the Bible alone but juxtaposed with the situation in Zimbabwe today. Relevant issues are integrated into the sessions and examined using the Bible as a reference.

The other strategy of the women's department, the hiring of full-time women church workers, was also in part an effort to address the issue of IGP failure. In addition to lack of skills and lack of markets, the other impediment to success was lack of leadership. Since project management and monitoring was usually done by the individual club's leadership, time and her own skill level were problematic. It was imagined that someone employed by the churches on a full-time basis would have both more time and more expertise. However, the tasks of these paid church workers involves more than monitoring income-generating projects.

> The task of the project officers involves improving the economic status of women and improving their participation in decision making in church. It also involves promoting the spiritual growth of women in the churches (Ibid, p 17).

Additionally they are one per church, meaning denomination, not congregation. So their time is still limited in terms of assisting individual women's groups with their IGPs. Although the author concedes it is too soon to judge the success or failure of the paid church workers, one other potential problem has clearly emerged. That is a power struggle between the staff person and the pastor's wives who have traditionally been in an unchallenged leadership position.

As a major representative body of the church in the country, the Council's has clearly shown that it places priority on the material well-being of Zimbabweans. Having such a priority is an important expression of concern about the spiritual well-being of people. The Council leadership has never seen a need to separate itself from one area of human life and focus solely on another, namely religion. That holistic view of people and willingness to be involved in their day-to-day lives is indicative of the kind of Christianity found in Zimbabwe.

The purpose of this chapter was to provide some background illustrating the important role of the church in contemporary Zimbabwe and women's active involvement in the church's development work. Hopefully, this background will facilitate a reading of the case studies which does not presume that women or their organizations are peripheral. It should be clear that the church in Zimbabwe today does not

support Christian women's organizations simply to keep women away from the action. As the General Secretary of the ZCC said, "the power base is with them!"

CHAPTER 5

THE CASE STUDIES

I was surprised to learn of the great number of organizations in Zimbabwe which fit my criteria for this study. According to the NANGO (National Association of Non-governmental Organizations) Directory there were 44 registered NGOs which are specifically women's organizations. These do not include the many small unregistered, community-based women's groups operating in both urban and rural areas nor does it include the many women's cooperatives in Zimbabwe. Also, it must be remembered that an organization like the Methodist Women's Association listed once in the Directory actually represents dozens, if not hundreds of small congregation-based women's groups.

Since a good number of the women's organizations were also Christian organizations I had more to chose from than I had imagined I would. Prior to beginning my fieldwork, I was only aware of the YWCA and the church-related women's fellowships and prayer unions. The large number of organizations available provided me the opportunity do more interviews than I had planned to and to select a sample of organizations that represented the various types of groups within my broad interest of Christian women's groups. This was important because along with the large number there was great diversity. The groups could be categorized or

catalogued in a variety of ways; for example, by size, by age, by constituency, by activities, by organizational structure. Some were completely indigenous, others started by missionaries or foreigners. Some were professional associations while others catered to grassroots women. They had various mandates, goals, priorities, target groups and methods of operation. Some were tied to a particular denomination - almost an extension of a church - while others were interdenominational and still others non-denominational with non-Christian members. I will further discuss the significance of differentiating among the organizations in the next chapter. However, the organizations also had some things in common. The most important of which was that they provided a space for women where they could be free to be themselves. A space where they could learn, serve, teach, give and receive, speak out and listen to others, or just share their lives with other women. Perhaps creating this "space" is the real story of Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe.

I had interviews at twelve organizations and did observations at two. I also interviewed two educators in the field of religion. One was a woman professor at the University of Zimbabwe and one a professor at the United Theological College of Zimbabwe. Of all the organizations I had contact with, I chose six to do case studies on. I chose them for the practical reason that I had enough information

on them to do a substantial case study. Also, I think these six well represent the phenomenon of Christian women's organizations.

The organizations chosen include two not affiliated with any church which are indigenous and have wide grassroots networks. They are the Association of Women's Clubs (AWC) and the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau (ZWB). The second two are distinct because they are both part of larger international organizations. Those are the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Catholic Development Commission (CADEC). The last two are church-based groups, the Catholic Women's Clubs and the Ruwadzano/Manyano (fellowship) of the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe. These six organizations are some of the largest women's organizations in the country. They are involved in a surprisingly wide variety of activities but working from a broadly-speaking common agenda. They all want to help women improve their lives so they can in turn improve their families and communities.

Association of Women's Clubs

The Association of Women's Clubs is just that, a loose association of hundreds of small clubs scattered throughout Zimbabwe. In March of 1993, the organization completed a self-study and re-organization plan. In the resultant report it was stated that there are 40,000 members, 80% of whom

live in rural areas. In the Executive Summary of the AWC New Programme it says:

> They have organized themselves into 1780 clubs and projects, because they are marginalized and lack basic essential skills to improve themselves and cope with their domestic and community duties effectively (AWC, 1993 p S1).

The organization was started in 1950 by a woman of great vision by the name of Helen Vera Mangwende. Mrs. Mangwende was one of the few African women to found a women's organizations in Zimbabwe prior to the 1970s. She founded AWC, according to its current chairperson, because she was appalled at the conditions African women and children lived in under colonialism. Mrs. Mangwende was a school teacher and chief's wife in Murehwa and started the 'Federation of African Women's Clubs' (original name) as a grassroots movement.

The same beliefs, concerns and ideas for change that were held by Helen Mangwende, were echoed by the organization's current head, Mrs. S.H. Like her predecessor, Mrs. H believes women are at the center of their families and their communities. Therefore, any women's programs not only help women but, everyone else that she is responsible for. Mrs. Mangwende "firmly believed that the Clubs' women would use their newly acquired skills, information and knowledge to develop the village communities in which they lived" (Interview transcript). She travelled extensively as

does Mrs. H today, who once a month makes a five to ten day tour of most of Zimbabwe.

The original training program was typical for one of that era. The focus was as follows:

> A basic home economics course where women were taught sewing, cookery, nutrition, agriculture, home and childcare, hygiene and leadership. The women learned how to make garments for the family...to make decorative items for their home...cooking lessons where recipes were both traditional and western dishes....
> There was an introduction of western methods of home care and hygiene, with vaseline and soap-making being introduced (AWC, 1993, p 9).

Other aspects of the original Federation were competitions and visits between clubs, and an emphasis on financial self-reliance. This was done by collecting membership fees and leaders working on a voluntary basis. Today this practice is continued. Although these clubs can be made up of the 'poorest of the poor' each woman pays a nominal annual fee. Due to funding problems the entire staff at the headquarters in Harare has been working without pay for several months! Another legacy of the founder was the importance of choosing and training the organization's leadership from the grassroots.

> When the women formed a club they selected one of them, who was trainable, and who had the ability to mobilize and train the clubs in her area. She wa called an Area Trainer. The Area Trainers carried out their teaching activities on a voluntary basis....As soon as the women formed their club and chose an Area Trainer from among themselves, they then had to elect a Committee, which was trained in leadership skills for policy-makers (Ibid, p 10).

Another important position of Helen Mangwende was that the leadership and skills training be brought to the women. This too is still followed today by way of mobil training. The rationale behind this is that women should not be separated from their families and communities during training because the training they received was to help their improve her immediate environment. Mrs. H believes this as well. One of the first things she said during our interview was on this very subject. When I asked about the philosophy of AWC, she replied:

> It's grassroots, community-based and considers the whole family. It encourages co-operation between women and their husbands and extended family. We also believe in perseverance (Int. transcript)!

Mrs. Mangwende died in 1955, just five years after the association was registered under the Welfare Organizations Act. However, she accomplished a great deal in five years and inspired other women to continue her work.

> Among her many achievements were that she created an organization with a structure that enabled marginalized African village women to socialize together at the local level and, in that environment, to learn skills that enabled them to care for themselves and their families (AWC, 1993 p 10)

From 1955 to independence, the Association was headed by white women. They followed Mrs. Mangwende's basic program however. They also made a few changes which enhanced the program. For example:

> The Area Trainers received specialized training to become Trainers of Trainers. The Mobile Unit, a car fully equipped with training items necessary

> for the courses was introduced. It was manned by two highly qualified Home Economics experts called Demonstrators who were based at each Regional Headquarters. With the assistance of the Area Trainers, the Demonstrators travelled from village to village responding to the requests for training made, by the Club Members in each area (Ibid, p 11).

At independence in 1980, the organization experienced a crisis. The still predominantly white leadership lacked confidence in both the new African government and in African women's ability to lead the organization successfully. They decided to disband the AWC. However, the membership refused to accept that decision and began the fight to save their association. The organization has been struggling over one issue or another since then, but it is highly unlikely it will disband due to the tenacity of its membership.

In our interview Mrs. H summed it up by saying "it's too important an idea to let die due to lack of support". Although the membership in 1980 - and today - was largely rural women with little or no formal education, they "approached the new government for support to save their organization". The government perceived the "non" in non-governmental to mean anti-government at that time. They also believed the only women's organization necessary was the Women's League of the Party. But AWC, along with other groups, continued the dialogue until they won the government's support. After gaining government approval the Club's members next looked for new leadership. They "approached professional, middle-class African women who had

experience working with the Clubs or indeed with women's organizations". Several women turned down those requests but finally two willing workers were found and one (Mrs. H) is still with the Association.

The next step was to call a national meeting. This "Old members' Consultative Meeting" was held in 1982 at Chitsere School in Harare. At their own expense, Club members travelled from all over Zimbabwe to attend. It was a very grassroots and participatory gathering. Several rural women spoke.

> The most important thing emphasized by the Club's members was their desire that the Club be saved. This was their only source of acquiring skills, information and knowledge in their households at the village level, speaker after speaker explained on that day (Ibid, p 12).

Also, in spite of the financial hardship caused by the recent drought, $585.00 was raised spontaneously at that meeting. They wanted the organization saved and expressed their faith in the AWC with their financial contribution and by giving a vote of confidence to their new leaders.

Following the Chitsere meeting, the new leadership made some important changes. The name was changed from Federation of African Women's Clubs to Association of Women's Clubs, the constitution was reviewed and revamped, and external donor funding was solicited. Also, during this period of re-organization and rejuvenation (1982-1988), the AWC continued its dialogue with the government and ruling party in an effort to build appreciation and co-operation with the

Association and other NGOs. But the most significant of the noted changes was in the move away from financial self-sufficiency:

> From 1982 to 1988 the organization was saved by linking into those Donors projects who themselves were looking for partners in the newly independent Zimbabwe. By 1988 the Association of Women's Clubs had been saved. The organization was running many projects with 19 different Donors. 75% of the funding that has come into the AWC between 1984 and 1992, through most Donors has been for the Mozambique Refugee Programme. Some AWC Area Trainers are hired to take turns teaching the same courses they teach to women here, to the refugees in the five Refugee camps (Ibid, p 12).

In June 1988 a second meeting was held. Four hundred women attended the Zvishavane General Conference. Participants still had to pay their own way but the Mine authorities donated room and board free of charge. At this meeting the membership was as vocal and persistent as they had been six years ago, only now their concerns were different.

> They felt left in the dark about the operations of the organization since the meeting at Chitsere in 1982. They explained that there was little or no communication between the Headquarters in Harare and the five Regions as no regular meetings were called by the new leadership. They wanted to be informed on the financial situation as they never received any financial statements. They were aware that there were Donors who funded AWC programmes, however there was no information on who these Donors were, and how these worked with the AWC. The women wanted to have access to them to improve themselves. They complained that they no longer received the types of courses that they had received before 1980, nor did they receive the newsletter which in the past kept members in touch with one another's activities (Ibid, p 13).

Although the women expressed a number of serious problem areas, they still wanted and needed the Association. Just as they had said six years prior, they repeated that the Clubs were their only access to education for self-improvement. They also, apparently, were not dissatisfied with the leadership per se, because although there was a re-shuffling of positions, the same three women remained at the helm after elections. The executive committee took the membership demands seriously and began in ernest to search for ways to address their grievances.

An evaluation revealed that in its previous attempt to save AWC, those in charge had gotten away from the original - and for the grassroots members most important - components of the program. To redress that a second reorganization happened which resulted in the 'New AWC Outreach Programme'. Some of the details are as follows:

> The New AWC Outreach Programme has five Mobile Skills Training units, in each of the Association's five Regions, to operate from each of the AWC's five Regional Head Offices. The Mobile Skills Training Units are to engage the services of fifty Demonstrators and one hundred Area Trainers....
>
> To consolidate the Outreach Programme that is based on the Mobile Skills Training Units, this will be followed by Intermediate Training available at AWC's five Regional Centres, operated by five Regional Centre Coordinators with a total staff support of thirty....
>
> The Clubs and Clubs Projects will be supported by training at the various levels mentioned above. They will be consolidated by the Revolving Fund and Loan Facility to ensure the groups get a head start in their ventures.

> The final Department offering services will be the Intercountry and Relief Programme. This has been set up to service the members in Zimbabwe during emergencies since the whole programme has resulted from the emergency Refugees programme for Mozambicans (Ibid, p 25).

Although still tied to Donor funding, mostly for refugee programs, the new organization of the AWC aims at re-instituting three of the cornerstones of the original Federation: practical training; local leadership and trainers; training brought to the women.

Other ideas for improving operations include: compiling a comprehensive database of the individual Clubs and club projects, with information on membership, trainers and courses offered; a standardization of the selection of Area Trainers; decentralization of policy formulation to the village level via Club Committees; use of needs assessments as basis for project formulation (these village level needs assessments will be used as the basis for funding discussions with donors); re-establishment of the position of District Leader with one in each of Zimbabwe's 59 districts. This is a liaison and co-ordinator position. Demonstrators now will be screened and better trained with "regular refresher courses and seminars for staff" being offered. A new post will be created called Field Officer and there will be one for each stage of the program.

> The function of the Field Officers is to follow up, monitor, evaluate and recommend strategies to improve the activities of each stage in each Region. The Field Officers will report directly to the Programme Specialist. The Field Officers will

> travel extensively throughout the country, following up their stage's activities and its impact on members capacities after Skills Training in each Region (Ibid, p 29).

The above-mentioned stages are as follows: The Women and Basic Skills Training; The Woman and Family Health; The Woman and Early Childhood Education and Care; The Woman and the Environment; and, The Woman and Business Enterprises. In addition to these training stages offered to the general membership, the organization's leadership realized the need for more and better training at all levels of the administration. The training's objective is stated as:

> To create a Policy Making Body which through training is professional in the execution of its duties, capable, confident and credible with foresight and vision. To allow staff to gain knowledge, expertise, skills, correct insight and attitudes and to develop in them, human and conceptual skills (Ibid, p 31).

The training will take place both on the job and at workshops or in academic courses. Courses will take place both locally and abroad. Non-formal Education methods will be used. Among the enumerated benefits are many tangibles plus "orienting AWC staff attitudes toward professionalism to obtain greater effort, commitment and loyalty; and to improve the quality of staff relations within the organization" (p 32). Some of the compulsory topics to be studied by all staff include: The history, constitution and structure of the AWC; The role of NGOs in local and national development; The Zimbabwean government National Development Programme; and, The situation of women in Zimbabwe.

Other new and important changes since the 1988 re-structuring includes the institution of four new committees and greater networking with other organizations. The committees include finance, administration, ad hoc legal and programme. These committees provide professional-level assistance to the national leadership and headquarters and institute a kind of checks and balances system. As does the National Council, which also de-centralizes the power of the AWC.

AWC has always worked cooperatively with other organizations. However, those interactions were sporadic and unrecorded. Like many women's organizations, AWC spends much of its time and energy trying to survive. But this very struggle to survive has caused AWC and other groups to come together on a more formal basis. Women's NGOs in Zimbabwe network for many reasons including: to share information and other resources; to tackle common problems; and, to present a united front on issues of concern to all women. Both the financial and philosophical 'backlash' against women caused by Zimbabwe's current economic problems have increased women's awareness of the need to work together.

> However since embarking on the restructuring exercise a number of such NGOs that had worked with the AWC have come forward to reinforce their ties with the Association. On the part of the AWC there is a realization of the importance of developing these relationships for the benefit of the AWC (Ibid, p 35).

Some of the organizations AWC has established ties with in Zimbabwe are National Association of NGOs, Harare Legal

Project Centre, Federation of African Media Women (Zimbabwe), and EMCOZ Improve Your Business (and ILO program). Outside the country they work with FAVDO, PAC and Contact Group.

The New Programme looks great on paper but in fact AWC is currently in great difficulty. According to Mrs. H they "are in serious financial trouble". Due to the fact that the organization almost collapsed twice, it also has a "PR" problem. According to Mrs. H, I would not have approached them for an interview "if you'd heard the gossip first". As mentioned, currently the entire executive staff at headquarters (three women) are working on a completely voluntary basis. Other staff can get a small salary from profits of the various IGPs, but not the executive staff. When I tried to find out exactly why their 'new programme' proposal was not attracting funders, Mrs. H seemed both puzzled and angry about that herself. She related a story where at a meeting recently instead of reading her prepared speech, she blasted the donors for their insincerity. She said "they're always talking about grassroots women" but won't fund the AWC which targets exactly that population.

Mrs. H was not, however, defeated or fatalistic. The AWC is currently concluding funding negotiations with Africare; a relationship about which she is very excited. "It's better to have one solid friend", she said. Perhaps a lesson learned after dealing with a myriad of donors only

willing to support specific projects rather than the concept of AWC. Even given their current crisis, it seems AWC is not about to go under. "Defeat never was on the agenda of any African woman" says the national director emphatically.

Zimbabwe Women's Bureau

> The vision of the Bureau is a Zimbabwe in which all women are well-educated, self-reliant and economically successful (1993/94 Programs and Projects brochure, p 4).

The Bureau was organized a few years prior to Zimbabwean independence. One of its first activities was to do an extensive field study of women's lives and status in Zimbabwe. This was done expressly for the new government, to provide it with the information needed to begin the work of improving women's lives. According to the current director of the organization, women suffered the most during the war, since it took place in the rural areas, and so they expected to benefit from the independence it achieved. Like each of the organizations I studied the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau (ZWB) has a unique history but a similar background and purpose. It was founded in 1978 by a group of Christian women coming together.

> But at that time, ZWB got organized through churches, through church women and in the forefront were pastor's wives like Mrs. K and some of the elders, some of the laity like Mrs. M, Mrs. I of the Roman Catholic. Mrs. M of the Methodist and some from the Anglican church; different churches and the YWCA (interview transcript, p 4).

From the beginning the Bureau was concerned with the plight of rural women. Even today 70% of the African

population of Zimbabweans live in rural areas and of that group the majority of adults are women. The number of women having to make a living on their own for themselves and their children in the rural areas has always been high. Prior to independence it was due to apartheid and then the war. Since independence it is due to men going to the cities and towns for work, women loosing their husbands in the war and divorce. The Bureau focused its efforts on helping rural women to help themselves before, during and after independence. Since rural women had proved their strength and independence during the war, the ZWB began with participatory development ideas and methods, rather than relief or top-down measures.

> So they formed an umbrella organization which was the ZWB. And when they formed this umbrella organization their objectives were to educate the women in the rural areas that (had) liberated themselves. Other people will help but if they don't look at their plight and start to discuss and see, find ways and means of how to address their problems other people cannot come in and organize their lives (Ibid).

This work, which the director referred to as conscientization, was largely done by Margaret Zwita who was hired as the first coordinator.

> She was the one that used to go out into the rural areas using churches, using schools, with volunteers to hold seminars, conferences (and) talk about life as it is. How it is affecting them. What they can do economically, legally and socially for themselves. And then they went right through like that (Ibid, p 5).

Simultaneously the ZWB leadership continued meeting in Harare to determine its course, its contribution and its

focus. That early group included blacks and whites, men and women.

> Then during independence we then sat again as an organization and said here we are, we have been fighting, we have been urging women to help their daughters and sons who were fighting the evil oppression of the regime. Now that we are independent what should we do? And then we thought we should look into issues, into broader issues affecting women so that we can carry the parcel to the new government and say these are the raised issues affecting women, black women especially at that time (Ibid).

The decision was made to do an extensive field study of rural women's situation in Zimbabwe. The Bureau was uniquely positioned to do such a study, having both an educated leadership and an extensive grassroots network. Hundreds of women were interviewed and the resulting document - appropriately titled "We Carry a Heavy Load" became a sort of second Bible to Zimbabwean Christians working in women's development. The document was written for the new government to give them the data they needed to begin making policies and programs that would address women's needs as expressed by the women themselves. Obviously this was a unique and priceless contribution about which the Bureau's director spoke with much pride.

> I remember at the time the present president was the Prime Minister of this country and the President was Banana. And we with our chairperson, who was Mrs. Makwindera at the time, making a parcel of that report to the President, to the President's wife and to the Prime Minister who was Robert Mugabe. So that it can help them as a part and parcel of what issues were affecting women (Ibid p 6).

This study was not only of use to the government but provided the framework for ZWB's own work in the years just after independence. The three main issues raised by women in the survey were their economic status, their legal status and their status in relation to men. Actually these three issues were interwoven into a complex web which entangled women and prevented their full development.

Prior to changes made in the early 1980s African women's lives were ruled completely by customary law. Under these laws (which were traditions made legal by colonial government or new ones instituted independently by the minority government) African women were considered minors and dependents throughout their lives. Prior to the war, women were often alone in the rural areas because men were working in the mines, the towns or in South Africa. During the war women were alone in the rural areas because men were still away working or were fighting or training - again often outside the country even. Since these husbands and fathers earned meager salaries and sometimes had a second wife in town, they would send little or nothing of their salaries home. The majority of Zimbabwean women then were de facto heads of household. They had complete responsibility for the maintenance of themselves, their children and often their parents or parents-in-law. But this responsibility did not bring with it any real power or other benefits. My

informant illustrated women's dilemma by sharing her mother's story:

> I know myself that my father was working in town and my mother produced more than anything he was bringing home because the salaries were nothing. It was not even worth it what he was bringing home. It was nothing. It was just staying in town (i.e. covering his own expenses) but my mother was producing more. She was producing crops that were even used to buy a goat. A goat would buy a cattle, cattle would buy a plow and the home would develop. But at that time the name that was prevailing (i.e. who the property belonged to) was not my mother's name. It was her husband's name which was my father (Ibid p 7).

So while women were working hard to build financial security for their families they were themselves extremely vulnerable. Both tradition and law meant that their own position was perpetually insecure.

> And he could contract another marriage in town while the poor woman is there and if he goes home he can dismiss her if he wanted. "Pack and go, leave my children, leave everything and go back to your parents" (Ibid).

Urban women's situation was not really any more stable. Most were living illegally in cities and towns. Most were employed in the informal sector or that highly vulnerable position of domestic servant. Even educated women in formal employment also had no financial security, just because they were women.

> As they are minors there is no equality. Meaning to say we didn't have maternity leave, we could not be employed on (a) permanent basis - then you could not enter into pension. You were always employed on (a) temporary basis and if you went on maternity leave you were to resign and then re-apply. If you were taken you were lucky. If you were not taken you would keep on looking for a job. Ad it didn't matter how wise, how

> capable, how better qualified you are, as a woman you would not be in a position of being a manager or head a school or head a hospital, whatever it is because you are a woman (Ibid p 8).

The Zimbabwe Women's Bureau leadership realized that women's economic development was tied up with her legal status. And that her legal status was tied up to her relationship to men. They therefore assaulted the problem at a variety of levels. The Bureau worked to get the laws changed. They worked to get people's attitudes changed. They worked to provide women with women-owned economic activities and income-generating opportunities. They have remained consistent in this three-pronged attach and have registered success at each level.

The ZWB is a financial success. Its projects are working. It is able to generate funds from a variety of sources. Their multi-method strategy extends into their organizational management as well as being part of their philosophical grounding. The bureau writes grant proposals and receives external funding but, it also runs a business which generates a reliable income. That business also provides a service. It is a residential conference facility which is rented out primarily to other Christian and/or women's organizations. Additionally the income-generating projects of its women's groups contribute to the maintenance of the Bureau. It also promotes the concepts of volunteerism and self-reliance.

The ZWB has also been successful in establishing and maintaining good relations with the government, a real working relationship, as well as with other NGOs.

> ...ZWB does not work in isolation. We work very much in liaison, in collaboration, with government itself. When it comes to technical advice we work with AgriTech. We have got a number of projects in the rural area which are mainly in food production and we are now encouraging organic farming. We are encouraging permaculture. We are encouraging better farming methods. We employ an agricultural officer and we are working, again closely, with those organizations that are looking into issues affecting women (Ibid p 10).

One of the ways the Bureau co-operates with other organizations is to invite in resource people from NGOs dealing with various women's issues. And they work with the whole spectrum of women's organizations in Zimbabwe from the Family Life Council to WAG (Women's Action Group). They also participate in training offered by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. But ZWB also has its own training department.

> This training department is run by the projects department. We started by running the training to train fieldworkers, 13 fieldworkers, scattered around the country. We have 30 adult literacy workers who help women not only to read and write but to use popular education, to use functional literacy, to use economic literacy. So that what they are doing should be in relation with their adult education. We think a person is only equipped if she knows why she should be literate (Ibid p 11).

The director of the ZWB believes strongly that women around the world have similar life situations, issues and problems. So she was proud to tell me that the organization has participated in the UN forums on women. She said, "Then

we have always attended all of the UN Forums from the time they started in the seventies. ZWB was always represented even before it was registered as an organization" (Ibid pp 11-12). And the Bureau does not just send its educated, urban-based leadership. That leadership wanted grassroots women to go as well, to both listen and learn from others as well as to speak for themselves and share their own stories. the significance of that leadership decision is reflected in the following story:

> One woman from Matabeleland said, "I now know that it was not my custom, my culture that was oppressing me at that time. Because as a Ndebele woman from the chief, the royal family, I used to know I as a woman could not stand up and speak in front where there are men. Or can address to men without sitting down, without looking down. But why is it that after independence the ZWB sent me to do a course, with the adult literacy organization and I did it. And I teach standing up in the same community that was saying it was not good culturally for a woman to stand up and speak where there are men. Why is it that the law does not now stop me to do that?" And then all the people looked and said this woman should repeat what she said. And she said "I would have thought now that the Prime Minister (Robert Mugabe) and the President Banana who are African, the culture should be stronger than it was. Why is it not like that? Now I know it was the system and it was the law and that system was being used by our husbands, our chiefs, our elders to oppress. Because they know if we worked together with our husbands, with our fathers then we will become too strong. But if we are separated and we are mis-treating each other we will, you know the husbands by themselves cannot make it". So everybody said, "O she is saying the truth". And she said, "...why can't those men tell me to sit down now?" (Ibid, pp 12-13).

Although younger than the other organizations I studied, the ZWB has also changed with the times. Also like

the other groups, the Bureau changes without loosing sight of its roots and foundation, Christianity. In the last five years the Bureau has been working in new areas and in new ways. This is the result of its follow-up study. The second study was much more broadly based in its scope and therefore in its design and methodology. Instead of looking at women as a separate group, it looked at women as an integral part of society. Instead of looking at women as passive participants in their own oppression, it looked at women as actors. The Bureau had learned that women can be powerful change agents in their communities.

> But if you see the new follow-up, the Part II is now addressing a woman not as a single person but in the family. And it's addressing not issues of legally and on the economical nature but it's addressing environmental issues, health issues. You know all the issues that are there to prohibit the woman to be herself. And through herself, her family to develop with her; children, husband, sisters and brothers and grandparents. It is now a follow-up saying, "ten years after independence where are we?" Not as ZWB but as a nation. What do we need to identify for the people to develop themselves? They are the ones who have the answers. They will identify the problems and they will know that if such and such a thing was done we would be better off but they need help (Ibid, p 6).

The second survey was actually a participatory action research activity. It is an on-going and powerful community development tool. It is a way to build bridges between groups who had previously not talked together, at least not on an equal footing with everyone being heard. Not only do the women appreciate and benefit from it but, the community

leadership does as well. And the fora do not limit participation to ZWB women. They are deliberately inclusive.

> We are continuing empowering women by organizing women in the rural area itself. And the 'We carry a heavy load' follow-up now does not discriminate. We go to a community where we meet all the people in that community at all levels. If they are invited and they come and we have seen that it is very interesting to see: these people will come. And they will cherish that (saying) "we are so pleased that you have invited us and we have found a forum where we can talk (with) the people we live with". There was an area where one person said "I've **never** had a chance to talk at a mixed group where there are both men and women, and where there are chiefs and councillors, where there are people from other NGOs and other ministries of government. Now this has given me the chance that it can be done. We can call people and talk to them as people. To try and talk about our development as we are, as a ward, the village development and the district development. You see we had always talked to the councillors and other leaders but yet not had the chance to talk to the grassroots themselves". But because ZWB organizes such conferences where we don't say "you are not a member". You don't need to be a member. We say you need to be a Zimbabwean in that locality and then we organize (Ibid p 14).

Out of these community gatherings many practical projects have evolved. The Bureau writes a Programme and Projects brochure every two years each with a different theme. It lists the organization's priorities, as articulated by its membership, and the strategies to be used to work on those priorities. For example, the 1992/93 program theme was "Community Participation Builds the Future". The brochure contains the following as primary problems: food security, environmental degradation, insufficient water supplies and general economic difficulties faced by most women as a

secondary one. It was believed that the lack of adequate finances prevents the solving of the primary problems. It goes on to list ways to address the various issues and map out a two-year timeline for doing so.

Some of the projects that year were farming (both vegetables for improved nutrition and cash crops); poultry-, pig- and rabbit-raising; garment making (school uniforms, children's and adult's clothing); craft production and marketing; tree planting; and development of water supplies and irrigation. In addition to these income-generating projects, the Bureau continues to give attention to education as a means to development. The organization's staff is clear about the relationship between sustained development and training. The 1992/93 brochure states:

> Women are generally (the) poor of the poorest, the illiterate, unskilled, ignorant and unemployed. This situation has called many of us to find better working strategies for change. As a result Zimbabwe Women's Bureau through its ongoing evaluation programme has decided to focus its attention on awareness building, skills training, adult literacy, health programme and organisational skills (p 4).

In addition to its on-going organizing, consulting, income-generation and educational activities, the ZWB continues to be an advocate for women's rights in Zimbabwe. Currently it is focussing on the land issue. As was discussed in Chapter Three, during colonialism Africans were moved off their land and onto reserves. These areas were the worst for cultivation and habitation and created great

hardship for the majority of Zimbabwe's people. African land was given to white settlers and most of it used for commercial farming. The reserves were not only bad for farming but vastly over-crowded. Various government policies helped the white farmers to prosper and many blacks had to work on the commercial farms to survive. The great economic and social disparity caused by those unjust and racist policies was the main reason for the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. As an agricultural people the Zimbabweans had nothing without their land and economics were not the only force at play. There were spiritual, political and cultural ties to the land as well that were disrupted by colonial settlement. Thus the war for independence was a war for land. One of the major promises of the new government and expectations of those who swept it into power was land redistribution. So far the government has done a poor job in this area. The reasons for this are complex and outside the scope of this paper. At issue here is the role of the ZWB, and other women's organizations, in the land debate. And resettlement on the land is the debate of choice in Zimbabwe today. According to my informant:

> ...we are surprised that the government has not done something on the issue that we think is the most important issue as women and that is that women remained as head of family and the women still are head of families at home (i.e. in rural areas) and even in some cases here (in Harare). But women have no land rights...(interview transcript, pp 8-9).

But the Bureau took action, in conjunction with other women's groups, to see to it that women were represented in the debate and considered in any action the government takes.

> Just now when the President Mugabe appointed the Land Commission to look into the Land Tenure, we together with the Resource Center - the Resource Center being responsible for really coming up with the consultants, resource people to educate, through WILDAF (Women in Law and Development in Africa) organized a seminar and called people from all the provinces who were women farmers to come and put their issues together a women of Zimbabwe. Because we thought as individuals being interviewed some of them may not speak out as they are supposed to. But if they come here and put their own words together and then we put it in a report and present it to the Commission we will have added some more flavoring into the stew (Ibid, p 13).

The Zimbabwe Women's Bureau is a dynamic organization. It started out in a unique way and at an exciting time in Zimbabwe's history. Although it is much younger than most Christian women's organizations in the country, it is well-respected by both the NGO community and the government. It is also one of the better-funded groups so it must have the confidence of the donor community as well. ZWB is an interesting women's organization as well. It is indigenous but active internationally. It works with both urban and rural women. It works with men. It works with and yet still challenges the government. Its approach is both pragmatic and visionary. It works with all women and yet is proud of its Christian roots. This last idea was one I felt I needed to verify at the end of the interview. I asked, "how is this

a Christian organization?". Mrs. C. responded that the ZWB is a fully participating member of the ZCC. In fact she sits on the Council's board and represented them at the World Council of Churches meeting in South Africa in 1994.

Christians women's organizations not affiliated with a particular church are in some ways more vulnerable than those which are. The ZWB, however, seems poised for the future. It is Christian but not preachy, feminist but not offensive, has an inclusive but not diluted spiritual philosophy, is independent but not isolated. The Zimbabwe Women's Bureau is addressing women's real needs as expressed by women and their communities. It works on both immediate needs and the root causes of women's problems. Because of its focus and methods the Bureau is equally attractive to urban and rural, rich and poor, church-goer and non-church women, and perhaps most important to its future, young and old.

While these traits are important many of them are not unique to ZWB but rather could describe many other Christian women's organizations in the country. But the Bureau does have characteristics that are all its own. Even though its activities are similar to most other non-church women's organizations, its focus on economic self-sufficiency sets it apart. As does the strategy of not just working with the women but with the government, recognizing that structural issues must be addressed as well as helping women meet their

basic needs. Lastly, the research component of the organization is definitely unique. ZWB started by going out to learn first-hand from women in Zimbabwe what their concerns were and just what their lives were like. They continue to hold community meetings for the purpose of gathering and sharing information. Not only do these fora provide a unique opportunity for people to speak out on issues of mutual concern but collecting and disseminating information for others to use is an important contribution activity that does not happen often enough. That participatory action research may be the most important contribution of the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau.

Young Women's Christian Association

They YWCA of Zimbabwe is one of the oldest non-church women's organizations in the country. It is also distinct because it is part of a worldwide organization. But even though part of the world "Y" it exemplifies how Zimbabwean women have taken an idea from outside and made it their own. As will become apparent in the case study, the YWCA of Zimbabwe is very much a Zimbabwean Christian women's organization. The YWCA in Zimbabwe was founded in 1957. In an interview with National General Secretary, I was told that:

> It started in Bulawayo when a few ladies came together after a member of the Y came from South Africa. And she brought the idea of starting YWCA Zimbabwe. But then also in Harare the following year some people were also making some consultations, other members who had come from the

> UK and had experienced the YWCA there. They also started organizing and then that's how the YWCA was started (Interview transcript p. 1).

The YWCA in Zimbabwe, as in other countries, is very much an urban organization. This is atypical of Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe and so makes it somewhat unique. From its earliest days it focussed on helping women adjust to the difficulties of urban life. During the time the Y got started in Zimbabwe, the country was under an apartheid system. Most Africans in the cities worked at the most menial and low-paying jobs. The majority of black women had virtually no opportunities for paid employment. And the salaries earned by their husbands were meager. Therefore most black families in urban areas were extremely poor. Out of that poverty grew several problems that organizations like the Y tried to assist with. First and foremost were the generally appalling living conditions many women lived in. Secondly was the general lack of access to resources to improve one's life.

So the Y began, like most Christian NGOs, as a social welfare organization; with the specific objective of "solving problems related to women and children" (Ibid, p 2). The Y was, and to some extent still is, an organization of educated and/or professional women helping poor women. This was done through providing direct relief by, for example, collecting and distributing clothing, or providing safe, low-cost housing for single women, or providing pre-

schools. The Y was probably the first organization which provided pre-schools for African children allowing women to work outside the home.

Simultaneously, the Y was providing training for its members. Both job skills training for school leavers and for educated women, leadership training. The latter again was a unique opportunity for Africans. My informants were very proud to tell me that many of the women in leadership positions in Zimbabwe today - in government, NGOs and the professions - were early YWCA members.

The YWCA has tried to move with the time. From its inception through the 1960s it focused on social welfare and training. During the war years not much happened however.

> Then there was the time of the war. A lot of our activities were disrupted because everyone else was preoccupied with the war situation. Young girls were going to join the war and things were really not easy (Ibid, p 4).

After independence the organization changed its focus quite a bit. It moved from being an urban organization to an urban and rural one. It moved from direct social services to development activity. This was not just a geographical and strategical shift, but a philosophical one.

> And then the executive committee at that time felt that maybe they should address new needs. And also appeal more to the grassroots level women....They wanted to appeal to the rural areas because most at that time felt that the YWCA was for elite women and the not so educated did not feel they could also participate (Ibid, pp 4-5).

Moving into work with rural, grassroots women required new strategies and programs. The YWCA began a recruitment drive and instituted the use of field workers. Field workers were grassroots women themselves identified by their communities - two per province - and sent for training. The training was two-fold. It was geared to increasing their general educational level and to teaching new skills.

> And mostly we were targeting at the very ordinary, the basic skills. Like even improving basket-making, how it can be done; soap-making, lotion-making, how to bake bread. The kind of skills which would improve the standard of living of the ordinary women in the community center (Ibid, p 5).

After training the field workers went back to their communities and taught other women what they had learned. Their work coupled with the organizations overall recruitment drive caused membership to skyrocket.

> So the Y then appealed to a lot of local women and we were able to push up our membership; up to over 10,000. This is our numbers at the moment. We still have to do another census (Ibid).

The issue seems to be that women associate belonging to the YWCA with increased educational opportunities and increased earning potential. This is related, probably, to the fact that unlike other women's groups working in rural areas, the YWCA was originally an urban and elite women's organization. Obviously, this is an expectation the YWCA cannot meet for 10,000 women, and it is a problem.

> They are not employed and some of them have very basic education. And some of their aspirations are to further, to improve their skills, to get

> further education in areas for project management. And they expect by belonging to the Y they are going to be improved; maybe they'll get a job; maybe they'll get funds to start up small projects. So this is the dilemma we are facing (Ibid, p 6).

In spite of not being able to meet some women's expectations for further training that will lead to employment, the YWCA has accomplished a great deal with its limited resources. Some of the Y's most successful programs are its hostels, its pres-schools and its leadership training. Since the 1960s the organization has been providing low-cost housing for single women in Harare and Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's two major cities. This kind of accommodation is something YWCAs worldwide provide for young women; usually in urban areas as well. The Y's current leadership hope to begin moving the operation of the hostels from a service to a profitable business endeavor. The potential is certainly there.

The pre-schools of the YWCA also have a long history. The Y was one of the first organizations to provide daycare for African children. This enabled women without the level of income needed to afford private care to work outside the home. Again this was a particularly urban need as the extended family system still provided daycare in rural areas or women could take their babies with them to work on the commercial farms.

It should be noted that the Christian orientation of the YWCA made both the hostels and pre-schools socially

acceptable in a culture where it was generally unacceptable for a young, single woman to live independently or for a woman to leave young children to work outside the home.

> Traditionally women were not allowed to work. For those who were professional of course they could. But the reason why they could not go to work was that they should be housewives looking at the kids. The YWCA started the pre-schools so that those children who were a stumbling block for the working woman would be looked after when the women went to work (Ibid, p 3).

Obviously this was a radical notion when YWCA pre-schools were started 30 years ago. However, the YWCA was something of a radical organization. It was, after all, international, inter-racial and a training ground for women leaders in the country. Early YWCA branch members were mostly professionals - nurses, teachers, social workers. They were educated women who were raised on mission stations. They were, therefore, exposed to different lifestyles and ideas. They were usually married to educated men and so many had opportunities to travel - even abroad - while their husbands studied. Some even studied abroad themselves.

Unlike many church-related women's organizations, the YWCA was not started or led by white women prior to independence. Although white women were involved in its beginnings, it was not a case of white women teaching, leading and molding African women. The African women involved, from the beginning, due to their own social status were on equal footing with their European sisters and soon

took over leadership completely. However, the organization did retain its Christian roots and that may have helped it to survive. Because now, unlike most other women's organizations not directly related to a church, it has a "good" reputation. It is that Christian aspect that has, in fact, caused the parents of the YWCA pre-schoolers to call for a Y-sponsored primary school.

> And what surprises us most is that because of the basis of our organization. They've approached us to start the primary schools because what the children get at pre-school level they find it to be a different type of education as compared to other pre-schools like the government pre-schools.....So we really feel that the education we give to our pre-schools is something to do because all our programs are Christ-centered (Ibid).

Currently there are five YWCA pre-schools, all in cities or towns, serving a total of 250 children. There are plans to expand into rural areas and a Canadian donor has expressed interest in funding such an endeavor.

The leadership training the YWCA does so well happens in two ways, one formal and one informal. The organizational structure has built into it a mechanism for helping women gain leadership skills. The first piece in that mechanism is the fieldworker. This is a paid position. As previously mentioned, local, grassroots women are chosen by their communities to participate in fieldworker training. Through this training they not only gain new knowledge and skills but "through the training that was given the field workers the confidence was built" (Ibid, p 7). These women hone

their skills through working with the community. When they return, people expect something from them. By teaching others and sharing information and organizing groups they develop even more skills. Those include facilitation, organization, administration. These are leadership skills. Some of the results of their development are as follows:

> Before independence women were not allowed to say anything or contribute to national discussions. But through the training that she mentioned and through the confidence that we built on women, they now hold positions at local level and they are there to improve their situations where they are (Ibid, p 7).

In addition to the paid field worker positions, YWCA members have the opportunity to develop leadership skills through the defused and participatory nature of the organizational structure. Starting at the first level there are branches, groups of about fifteen women at the neighborhood level. And even in these small neighborhood branches there are leadership opportunities. These opportunities continue to present themselves as one moves up through the organization. And the learning that occurs throughout is deliberate.

> Then the branches form a district committee. After a district committee there is a provincial committee. From the provincial committee there is a regional executive committee. That is the structure or the membership structure. At that local level women choose their officers and it abides to the constitution of (YWCA) Zimbabwe. The officers are there for two years, after that they change. That is how we train our members (Ibid, p 10).

Although this decentralized structure offers leadership opportunities and allows branches to tailor their programs to their specific environment, there are drawbacks as well. As mentioned earlier, one result is the unrealistic expectations of some members. Being such a large and widely dispersed organization, the YWCA is not able to meet the needs of its members as it would like. In addition to the size and location of its membership, is the lack of resources; not only financial but human. There are only 20 field workers in all of Zimbabwe which translates into a 500:1 ration between them and the membership at large. The YWCA tries to be creative in its approach so that as many women as possible can receive training.

> We are also affiliated as the Y to certain organizations which co-ordinate activities of NGOs. For example, on the Christian side we belong to the ZCC and pay our subscriptions there. They organize a lot of training workshops and they always call upon our members and say "send five lay women from the rural areas to come and participate". And then we belong to NANGO, national organization of NGOs and it has a section on women's fora and we are members as well. So they also send us invitations for training (Ibid, p 13).

They also bring speakers to the women in their home areas. This is done for both training and information dissemination purposes.

> But when it comes to certain issues where we feel they need to get the information, we find a resource person from different departments. Say the department of health did a workshop with this woman related to issues regarding AIDS, something like that. Then issues of other special skills. Somebody can come and demonstrate that skill.

> Again we call people from outside. Even on issues of real leadership. How do you run meetings (Ibid, p 14).

The YWCA staff members I spoke with would, however, like to develop their own training programs and materials on various issues. So that those materials would reflect both YWCA philosophy and the Zimbabwean context; unlike the training materials they receive from World YWCA headquarters, which are apparently limited in any case. They feel that they have the information "in our heads" but are lacking the resources - again, both time and money - to actually develop the materials.

The YWCA's executive would like to do more for its membership. They see the major issue for women in Zimbabwe today as their general lack of security and independence. This is directly related to women's lack of education. Because women generally have less formal education than men, they are less likely to be employed or at least not in the formal sector. This leads to financial dependence on men and the lack of power and freedom that goes with that. Also due to their lack of education women have less access to knowledge and information that could benefit them.

Several laws have been enacted in Zimbabwe since independence for the express purpose of improving women's (legal) status. However, as my informants pointed out these laws may prove useless if women do not understand or even

know about them, or if men are in a position to ignore them. My informants explained:

> ...A lot of laws have been passed now since independence to address women's issues positively. But a lot of us don't know what those laws are saying. We don't understand them. We have no access even to material to read about that. Maybe women don't even know what it means the Age of Majority Act and the Maintenance Act....So the lack of knowledge about laws which protect us I think is one of the major issues we are facing at the moment. So that men then take advantage of that. Because if you don't know they will exploit that ignorance (Ibid, p 20).

Therefore the YWCA staff would very much like to be involved in legal education and advocacy for its members. The YWCA through its large network of grassroots-level branches currently disseminates information put together by WILDAF (Women in Law and Development, another Zimbabwean women's NGO). But even with the new laws and efforts to inform women about them, change is slow. Women are still at a disadvantage for the reasons mentioned above - financial dependence on men and lack of education - and because of societal attitudes and the behavior caused by those attitudes. The reality for most women is still that:

> A woman is not very free or happy to use certain laws because society has not changed their attitude towards certain things. Like a woman can actually divorce because of certain circumstances in family situations. But even if she knows the law is there, she will not take advantage of it because society will frown on her. In our traditional culture our own mothers and grandmothers suffered a lot in their marriages. But they were always told that is how it should be. Just to be submissive and please your husband, his family, everyone. And this is how it should be and they were not expected to run away from the husband or to lead a separate life. We still have that in Zimbabwe if we

> really go back to our rural roots. We are not expected to say "now I've given up, I'm leaving you". So while the laws are there, society does not support the women to use those laws. And it leaves us in a very difficult situation (Ibid, p 21).

Divorce is just one problematic area for women due to traditional attitudes. Widowhood, single parenthood and de facto heading of households are others. In each of these situations women are still very dependent on family, usually in-law's, support and so are very vulnerable despite changes in the law. The leadership at the YWCA believes that there is reason for optimism however. They believe things will get better for women as women continue to realize their potential and to gain power through that. This empowerment can happen in a variety of ways, including through education, through organizing and through representation (in government). The YWCA is active in each of these three routes toward a better situation for women in Zimbabwe. However, they are also realistic about the obstacles, not the least of which is sometimes women themselves. It is not only men whose attitudes have to change if women's lives are to improve. For example, in the area of greater female representation, they had this to say:

> And maybe another problem we have as women is sometimes we don't recognize each other as a woman in position. This is something that is worrying us. Women don't support each other! We still look up to men. Not because we think me know better. But we don't recognize that somebody has potential. That one is an inborn problem....Women are frustrated by other women. And even if you go up to the political level. We would rather vote for a man as MP than vote for Edna. "What does she

know which I don't?" So we still have those attitudes among women themselves (Ibid, p 22).

In spite of these and other obstacles, the YWCA staff feel that their organization is positioned to make a real contribution in Zimbabwean women's lives. The reason for this is somehow both simple and complex. It is what the Y stands for and means to women. For example, that the Y has an excellent reputation is important because it means women will continue to join the Y. Unlike other similar organizations it does have young members. Also, the government will continue to look to the Y as both an informant on and a disseminator of information to grassroots women. Other, newer, more specialized women's organizations will continue to look to the Y for leadership, leaders, access to women, etc. And last but not least, men will continue to support their wives' participation in Y activities.

All of these predictions are based on the reputation of the organization. The YWCA is old and well-established yet dynamic. It has produced individual leaders and taken a corporate lead on women's issues. However, it is an organization which strives to work within the cultural context of Zimbabwe. It meets women where they are and doesn't try to take them where they are not ready to go. Also the YWCA is unapologetically a Christian organization; a stance requiring strength and integrity in the secular world of the donor agencies. This is particularly difficult

for a non-church organization which doesn't have those denominational ties for financial or technical support either. Due to the influence and strategies of missionaries in southern Africa many Zimbabwean Christians are very loyal to their particular denominations. So for a Christian organization to be non-denominational yet strongly Christian has not been easy. But the Y's leadership feel that its Christian identity is crucial to its survival. There is even a Christian Identity Committee.

> The YWCA is a Christian organization. All what we do and all what we look at we put our feet in Jesus shoes. We know that whenever Jesus went there were fruits that showed afterwards....And the committee is there whenever there are programs coming, they plan programs that will relate to what we will be doing at that moment. Be it a training or be it an executive meeting. You know there are crucial issues sometimes which when you come in you never know what will be there at the end of the day. But the Scriptures that we read and through the discussions that we have, it really cools down everything. Because we believe that all what we are doing, we are doing it for the sake of Christ (Ibid, p 16).

But perhaps more importantly than Christianity affecting the way the organization is able to function, with such an ecumenical group of women, it effects its very raison d'etre or determines its organizational worldview.

> What we look at as a Christian organization, we don't choose whether you are a white, whether you are a Roman Catholic, whether you are a Methodist. We only look at a woman as a creation of God. We want to build up the humanity of a woman (Ibid, p 16).

The YWCA provides three critical things for Zimbabwean women. Those a fellowship, service and voice. The Y provides

an opportunity for women to come together, discover that they have similarities as well as differences and to support one another in a safe and open environment. Because of its Christian reputation it is an acceptable fellowship for Christian women and married women but because of its open and ecumenical nature it is also available to non-church members. The services the Y provides are many and they benefit not only women but families and communities as well. The day care centers, hostels, skills training and leadership development programs are invaluable community resources. The YWCA provides a voice to women because it is an old, well-established, well-respected organization. The government, the church and other NGOs frequently call on the Y to disseminate information to women. Because it has such a large grassroots network it is also called upon to bring women's opinions to national debates. Providing an opportunity to the otherwise voiceless to be heard by the decision-makers is one of its most important and unique contributions.

Catholic Development Commission

This will be a combined case study because there are two Catholic organizations in Zimbabwe working with women in development and they are very closely linked. The largest is the Catholic Development Commission (CADEC) which was established in 1972. It is run out of the Catholic diocese of Harare. The commission is one of seven in the Catholic

church in Zimbabwe. Some od the others are the Youth Commission, the Marriage Commission and the Commission for Justice and Peace. CADEC like the other commissions is headed by a bishop.

CADEC is the official development arm of the Catholic church. It has no women's program per se but my informant there was hired specifically to address WID issues. She was hired partly in response to a mandate by the World Council of Churches (WCC) for the national Councils of Churches to provide salaries for paid women workers within various member churches. This was part of the plan of the WCC's decade of the 'Church in Solidarity with Women'. Since this is obviously a temporary arrangement one of my informant's priorities is to establish a permanent, staffed women's program within CADEC.

The second organization is the Catholic Women's Clubs (CWC). This is a loosely organized group of clubs mostly in the rural areas and usually affiliated with a particular parish. Some of these clubs are very old and many are mainly for spiritual fellowship. However, many others are involved in development work. CWC was founded in 1965. Its stated objectives are "to promote the full participation of women in development; to encourage self-reliance; to assist member clubs in their projects by providing material and financial assistance" (IRED Task Force, 1992, p 27).

Additionally CWC provides women with opportunities for non-formal education in areas such as leadership, crafts, bookkeeping and literacy. The function of providing member clubs with funds for projects has been taken over by CADEC. And in fact my informant at the CWC office would frequently refer to CADEC in response to my questions but at one point referred to the CWC as "the facilitating organization of the Catholic Development Commission". It seemed that the larger, more recently established organization had in reality swallowed the smaller, older one.

So for reasons I could not fully understand, the CWC continues to exist as a separate entity. It has an office and a staff. It seemed CWC still exists because it always has (i.e. tradition) and because it serves some unique functions. Apparently all-women's groups often go through the CWC office to get to CADEC while mixed gender or male groups go directly to CADEC. Also, the clubs sometimes engage in very small-scale IGPs that do not really need the kind of support that CADEC provides. In general, the unique function that CWC serves is to support WID activities without being a WID organization or program exclusively, which the Catholic church is opposed to. Also, since the clubs serve the purpose of providing spiritual fellowship they do not exist for the sole purpose of income-generating or other projects. So although CADEC in fact funds and co-ordinates almost everything, the Catholic Women's Clubs

still have a role to play, particularly for grassroots women who want to come together as women for support and/or development activities. While not explaining the continued existence of the CWC, my informant there explained the reason CADEC was formed in this way:

> Long back the Catholic Women's Clubs were known, well known. Then when it comes to independence there was a duplication of new organizations cropping up because of the commission of the Catholic, our own church. So, the church is always ahead of seeing things. They said that, "okay, there was no other organizations, of the indigenous organizations, except the local church....When the time comes, the church, the Catholic church said "okay, instead of running CWC gatherings, its a minor thing anyway"... maybe its the work in the drought which got them to that idea. The natural disasters and other things brought them to think that we need CADEC. For big things rather than the Catholic women (clubs) which is emphasizing, seems like is emphasizing to women only... (CWC transcript, p 12).

However, even though the CWC seemed insufficient to handle "big things" when a decision was made to form CADEC in the early seventies, the clubs continue to exist over twenty years later. Because while the clubs were considered ill-equipped to handle large projects they were not apparently considered superfluous. Some of the income-generating activities CWCs are involved in are pre-schools, bakeries, food processing, piggeries and shoe-making. Once a group decides on a project, they go to either the CADEC representative in their province or to the local parish priest who refers them to CADEC or directly to the CWC main

office in Harare. My informant there described the process like this:

> We only go to the community if they requested us. They initiate their own type of work themselves within their particular community to solve their burning issues...then later they will think of which organization to call and if we are lucky, they will write to us....and although we are to give them something to promote them, we don't give them money or anything without the initial training. Then if we come to agreement, let's say its a project, we do the project planning first then all of us will see whether this is going to be a viable project or not (Ibid, p 2).

So CWC does an initial assessment. First, if there is a parish priest in the area or a mission, they check with the priest or head of mission to learn more about the group. CWC wants to determine if the idea proposed will address a real issue or problem in that community. After talking with the local church leadership the process continues:

> ...we go there, talk to them. If it is specific on social work we deal with it. If we see that there is a need of clarifications on spiritual (things), we have a department and certain committees which are dealing with that again. So, usually we work as a team....The spiritual team and the social development team. We do our visit together trying to solve the problem there and there. The questions from the participants we just direct to the particular officer (Ibid p 3).

If a project then seems appropriate for a particular group in a particular community, a formal proposal is requested. At this point CADEC comes in.

> ...those representatives attend the diocese Catholic Development Commission committee meeting where they forward their proposals. Then the Catholic Development Commission at diocesan level they will discuss about the particular project, small business, and approve it as committee

> members. Us we are workers of the Commission. We don't approve but we deal with the books and you know just to direct them (Ibid, p 3).

Actual project approval is done by a local committee of church leaders, community lay leaders and democratically elected CADEC representatives. After approval CADEC staff make another visit. On this visit the Awareness Training begins. Training and awareness-raising are priorities of CADEC throughout their relationship with a group. They do not just provide funding and technical support but also help group members understand concepts like development and self-reliance and sustainability. As my informant at CWC pointed out:

> ...sometimes they will think "ok we can start this project and we will write to these partners and ask for a certain amount so our project will go"; grow up as they want. But let's say they write to CADEC, for example. We receive the letter and we acknowledge it but we are planning to visit the group. Now we go there....we meet all the members, we discuss face-to-face, we are now in a position to pose what we...the direction to be used. When we discuss this, we have to tell them what is exactly inside of CADEC and what it looks forward to from the group (Ibid, p 4).

Once mutual expectations are clarified and CADEC development philosophies and functions explained, the group enters the next phase. Training continues and is very experiential and hands-on. In addition to contributing one-quarter of the required funding, the group is expected to contribute labor and make decisions.

> Let's say we are at the stage definitely to give them money, there are certain things which they are to contribute. We give them 3/4, the

> Commission. Then some they are supposed to contribute 1/4. Like now we are giving $10,000. They will raise that money either in cash or kind. Depends what type of small business they are to initiate....Let's say (it's) a building, they are going to mold, the bricks, they are going to look for a builder, for other things. The result is they will do it locally. Then they go and do the proforma of what they want to use, to buy themselves. That is the training. That is awareness (Ibid, p 4).

The projects are monitored throughout. And consultative discussions with the community where the project is located continue throughout as well. Local CADEC representatives, not the Harare staff, are available for facilitating these activities and addressing any problems that occur. They act as liaison between community project groups and the staff at headquarters.

> If there are certain issues to a particular group that committee, CADEC representative, will visit to a certain group, discuss the issue with the group, record everything, bring the issue to CADEC office, head office. Bring the issue to the CADEC diocesan committee meeting so that the whole diocese will discuss, see how they work. It is not the CADEC staff who will approve but only give the awareness (Ibid, p 6).

The CADEC representatives are volunteers. Although they are chosen by their communities and are well-qualified, their non-staff status has problematic consequences.

> They are never paid. That's why they only call the meeting at a certain time. When they think they are going to have a committee meeting, they want to be equipped with the information. That's why they visit that particular project.
>
> After a certain time we will give the awareness training again to the CADEC committee members because they always change. So there are new members we have to have a workshop (Ibid, p 6).

However, both Catholic Women's Club and CADEC staff in Harare feel that having locally-selected field staff is important. The fact that they are unpaid, unfortunately but logically, does effect their commitment if not their performance. In addition to the commission representatives, CADEC has another group of important field staff. They are the adult literacy teachers. These people are paid by CADEC. Any community group where the organization is working may request a trained, paid teacher from CADEC. Although classes are open to anyone in the community the CADEC-funded project members benefit also.

> So as CADEC we saw that there is a need to these groups which we are developing, so we sent the Adult Literacy teachers to the training and we pay them for that service....It is the community which saw the problem (so) that teacher will belong to that particular program and provide that service either to the city council, church, community hall or to the school premises wherever the group can be accommodated. What is important is that CADEC is paying that teacher which is providing that service to the community and we benefit from her or him because he or she is also teaching our own groups (Ibid, p 8).

The literacy courses teach more than reading and writing. And the skills they impart are helpful to participants in their projects or small businesses as well as at home or in their family life.

> We also encourage them that they should know about how they are using their moneys at home, as the group members, at the church, wherever they are; even the school fees. They have to budget the little they have so we tell them if you don't know about money, you have to know what is going on starting with your own money (Ibid, pp 8-9).

Interestingly, accordingly to my informant, most of the participants in the adult literacy classes are women, even though they are open to everyone and there are male members in some of the project or small business groups. She puts forth the following interesting theory:

> Men you find they are two or three. It doesn't mean they are always educated, they are just shy to come some of them. You know men, they sometimes feel that "ah, no to be seen going to school at my age" but with women because they belong to the church they (are) used to be(ing) there; baby clinic, they are used to be(ing) there. At the bus stop they need to read all the names....They go to the market, they need to buy all the things for their own market in the community. They need to know the changes, they need to know the recording of those things. So if you tell them that "if you don't know about your money, if you don't understand you don't know, so it's easy for them to be motivated than men. That's how (laughter) (Ibid, p 9).

My informant told me the other educational need women have is knowledge about the technology related to their projects. For example, better ways of food processing. She said this training is less than adequate for two reasons. One is the lack of qualified instructors and the other is the lack of suitable training materials. Interestingly lack of funds was not the major issue for CADEC but, rather there just are not many appropriate technology experts, particularly women, trained and prepared to do training. Likewise, simple up-to-date and environmentally and culturally appropriate training materials are lacking.

When I inquired about other educational needs of the women CWC and CADEC works with, like some of my other informants she responded with legal awareness training. And,

as other interviewees had also pointed out, she felt the government has done a lot but many women are still unaware of the new laws or their ramifications. This is a problem area CADEC is willing to fund.

> We are going to have this office employ somewhere someone who can be the legal advisor in the community, in the rural community. There are no papers there, there are no radios there, there are no telephones....So in this case they need information which can promote that awareness which we are discussing throughout awareness training....We observed that we need a legal advisor in the rural (areas). (Ibid, pp 9 - 10).

Mrs. C feels very strongly that the church as a whole has a responsibility in this area; that is to increase women's legal rights awareness. She believes that lack of knowledge about women's legal rights is the root of many social problems. The church must do its part by building on the foundation laid by the government.

> The two main organizations - the church and the government - they are the leaders of the country. So legal awareness, people just ignore that but, it's a fact. As women, we are noting that. We are providing writing (literacy classes) and this and that but the rights, that is holding us behind....Our government is very good in looking at those things. But how sure are we that the poor, rural women are getting enough information that the government is supporting them (Ibid, pp 10 - 11)?

Mrs. C also feels that women need not only to be informed of new laws but included in discussions on further changes. And that men do as well, particularly those in leadership positions in the rural areas. Because of the fact that grassroots people were not included in earlier discussions,

many men and some women feel they do not have to support the new laws. This leads to problems of enforcement particularly in areas where even those in leadership (i.e. chiefs) were neither consulted nor formally informed. This leaves women at the mercy of so-called traditions which usually disadvantage them.

CADEC is not a women's organization and CWC is hard to define as an organization apart from CADEC. But I thought that the large numbers of Catholics in Zimbabwe made it imperative to include this combined case study in my data presentation. The Catholic church cannot be ignored. It has been actively involved in every aspect of Zimbabwean life since pre-colonial days.

> The Roman Catholics saw no reason why Zimbabwe should be the exclusive preserve of the LMS, especially in view of the fact that their own Church had been first in the field, more than three centuries before. Moreover, the period of decline of the Jesuits, which saw their withdrawal from Mozambique, and eventually in 1773 their complete suppression, had come to an end. The Society was officially restored in 1814, and by the middle of the century was well established in South Africa. There were dedicated men willing to take the Gospel to the interior, and in 1879, the move was made. Led by Fr Depelchin, an international party left St Aidan's College at the Cape, and headed for the Ndebele capital (Weller and Linden, 1984).

The Catholic church in Zimbabwe, like everywhere in the world is structured like a well-run corporation. Also, like anyplace else, spiritually you are either Catholic or non-Catholic but, in terms of outreach everyone is included. CADEC is a development organization funded and administered by the Catholic church. It does not, however, initiate

development projects. It responds to requests from already-established groups. It provides cash, materials and technical expertise. Those groups requesting assistance can be all male, all female or mixed-gender. Group members can be Catholic, Protestant or even non-church goers. A Catholic Women's Club may be one of the groups going to CADEC for assistance. This is where the organizations overlap. Previously neither was involved in development as it is commonly defined. The CWC was for women to have fellowship, provide personal support to one another and perhaps work together on group projects of benefit to their immediate families (without generating income). And CADEC was essentially a relief agency.

> Originally it was Social Service Development. That was the name given and after independence they realized that they should change their orientation of work. Cause it was more relief; so they had to be more developmental (Interview transcript of CADEC p 1).

CADEC has always been "mainly in the rural areas where we deal with what we call the marginalized people" (Ibid). But now their strategy is to give people the tools to help themselves. This transition has been difficult but the church is fully committed to it. One shift the organization has made is to respond differently to people's initial requests. Not everyone goes to CADEC - via the local parish - for funds to start a project. Some just go for a hand-out because they view the church in general and CADEC in particular as a place to go for material assistance.

According to Mrs. M at CADEC, one thing that came out of "an evaluation of the image of CADEC out in the rural areas ... (is) that CADEC is seen as the giver" (Ibid, p 9).

So the administration has really tried to construct an organization that appears to be clearly focused on and competent at development activity. The unpaid field workers are just part of the picture. They are really liaisons between project groups and the organization. Their greatest value is their residency and standing in a community. However, there are also several full-time, paid, trained staff employed by CADEC. In addition to the previously discussed adult literacy instructors, there are health workers, water and sanitation experts, refugee programs workers and training department staff. The most key players may be the development coordinators however. There is one coordinator per diocese and my informant described his role, training and experience as follows:

> He is the overall person in the diocese managing the programs....Most of them have trained as Social Workers at diploma level. That's the highest level most of them have. Then through experience they have mastered their job 'cause most of them have been in the job quite a long time. For almost ten years or so. They have experience (Ibid p 3).

Until two nuns were recently appointed as development coordinators in Mutare and Gokwe, all of the coordinators were men. The sisters' appointment was another outcome of the same evaluation which landed my informant in her position as head of the training department.

One of the negative consequences of its growing professionalism and specialization as a development organization has been charges from other commissions that CADEC too often works in isolation. That it even by-passes the local church when it responds to a request from a non-church group. When CADEC was doing relief it was more acceptable to be inclusive. Now, however, some in the Catholic church feel it needs to change that approach. Not to exclude people but to make use of what is already there.

> Because of the way we operate we're supposed to be linking up what we call pastoral and social work. That is the spiritual aspect and (the) social, that's the development aspect. But it's like, somehow (we've) been in isolation, just from being out in the communities as CADEC, assist(ing) the community as CADEC. But at some time we're supposed to be going through the church structures where people are already being mobilized as church groups, people already praying (Ibid, p 9).

If CADEC does not do this, how is it different from the secular organizations doing community development work? In trying to respond to that criticism and as another way CADEC has tried to be more effective and efficient as a development agency, the organization has de-centralized its operations. This change was important because it put more power in local hands.

> But the way we relate to the other diocese, before 1985, there was more control; in terms of decision making, approving project proposals, fund-raising in the diocese. And, it meant more work for the national office....to approve project proposals and get them to the donor agencies. Cause the way we work we have other church agencies abroad with which we work a lot.

> So, after 1985 they did an evaluation - it was an internal evaluation - then they realized maybe to make the diocese more efficient, they had to bring in some autonomy, to the structure. So, now each diocese has got its own autonomy. It can directly deal with the funding partner. Send a proposal to the funding partner; maybe "cc" a copy to the national office. We don't have direct kind of control (of) the way the dioceses are being run. But, we have a more coordinating role in assisting them with their program (Ibid, p 2).

The other change at CADEC is actually a work-in-progress. But because it has to do with the main focus of the study, it will be discussed at some length. That change is women's involvement. CADEC, like the rest of the Catholic church, is in constant tension around the issue of women's involvement and appropriate role or place in its activities. My informant at CADEC is a strong advocate for women and women's programs. Having been raised Catholic she is well-aware of the history of women's struggle for recognition within the church, as well as the importance of resolving that struggle. However, she is working under a real time constraint, as is explained below.

> In 1990 they did an evaluation and then they realized that the women were still not in the forefront in the church. They were behind in the projects. In mixed groups, women were actively involved but they did not have decision-making power....And then even in the personnel there were more males than females. So, it was decided to have a theme which was called "Women in Development in the Church". This was a theme that was gonna take CADEC three years, that was from 1990, 1991, 1992 to implement it. To try to gear towards re-addressing the imbalance between men and women. So that involved appointing me here. Like, usually there was a bias upon men and when I got the job, as a female educational officer, they thought that would enhance the whole process of

> trying to implement. So, that's what I've been targeting since I got employed in late 1992 until now. Trying to go out in the diocese; trying to train them on the position of women in the church, because we realize it's really lagging behind (Ibid, p 4).

Mrs. M is focusing her energies on her area of expertise, training. She feels if women have the skills they cannot then be denied the opportunities.

> So that's why Sister T has just been assisting me in the program for women, what we call our project managers, people who are running our projects in the diocese for women, trying to upgrade their skills. They lack - a major lack - of relevant skills. Most of our women out in the diocese don't have the basic, relevant knowledge (of) how to manage their own projects. So that has been the major emphasis, trying to improve what they already have. Cause they may be running projects but, they will be not very effective. So we're trying to improve the functioning of our counterparts out in the diocese (Ibid, pp 4 -5).

But it is a daunting task. Not only is she operating under a fast-approaching deadline, but what CADEC does or does not do is not going to solve the real problem. It is just one part of a large and complex organization, the Catholic church in Zimbabwe, which is part of an even larger and more complex organization, the Catholic church. And ultimately there will have to be policy changes from the church leadership in Rome to change women's status within the church in a meaningful and stainable way. Mrs. M is aware of the difficulty of solving the root of the problem.

> Again, it's a very political thing within the church itself. It all goes back to the bishops themselves (and) the sisters in the church, those vows of chastity you know. (They) are not trying to challenge (but) just trying to maybe improve

> the social and economic status (of women) and at the same time maybe trying to advocate for them; for women to be aware of their own position in the church and challenge the status quo as much as we can. Although it's very tricky (Ibid, p 5).

So even within the inner circle of the church there is conflict between men and women. My informant believes that even though they have taken vows of obedience, sisters are advocating for women's rights within the church in whatever ways they can.

But the sisters cannot do the work alone. Lay women too must be involved. When I asked Mrs. M if women out-numbered men in the Catholic church in Zimbabwe as they do in the mainline protestant churches, she responded:

> That's very, very true. Within the church, women they are the majority. They are more active in everything. There are more women in everything that is being done in the church. They have a more major role, an upfront role, than most men do. Well that has been acknowledged but what they are still saying "is that recognized, is that really felt on the part of women?" (Ibid).

I was excited to learn that one thing Mrs. M and other Catholic women in Africa are doing is working to solve their problems through networking. She explained, as other informants had, that they believe women share a common set of issues, concerns and problems, and that they can learn from each other and gain strength for their struggles from each other. As an international institution, the church is a natural vehicle through which women can unite. Speaking about the Catholic church in particular she said:

> But, we have these consultations as church agencies in different countries where we come and share our views as church development workers and then the issue of women is really coming out very strongly in our consultations. So, we're trying to promote again the role of women regionally, in our own, and with our counterparts. So, what we have just been planning is to have a regional training workshop in August which is going to involve about 13 countries, eastern/southern region. And we are also advocating for more women to come and attend the course. So, we are planning to have training programs like project management. Trying to create or conscientize on gender awareness again because we are still lagging behind in the region.
>
> Then, like myself, I've been invited to other countries like Kenya, Uganda. Where again we'll be meeting as church women, church development workers, women. Trying to share our views on how we can challenge the church again. Because it's like we are having the same problem (Ibid, p 6).

But the reality in Zimbabwe remains the burning issue and focus of energy of both my informants in the Catholic church. Right now the Catholic Women's Clubs seems to be the only legitimate way for all-female groups to initiate a development project. However, it was clear that the resources of CWC are very limited. With the exception of very small projects, the best way it can help is to connect women's clubs up with CADEC or other agencies having funds and technical expertise. It also seems that the perception out in the communities is that CADEC is where the money is, so some women's groups want to circumvent CWC altogether. But unfortunately CADEC, with the exception of Mrs. M and in spite of its three-year plan to include women in development, is resistant to WID in theory and therefore to

exclusively women's projects in practice. She explained the significance of fighting that resistance this way:

> Now the women's issue has been taken, entangled within like as a program; like I'm taking the case of CADEC. There is a debate on whether do we really need a women's program as a program or should we just emphasize all our programs gearing towards the uplifting of women? And we are saying, "no, there should be a program for women, in the church". Then, it will mean having a budget. That's a debate within ourselves here as CADEC and within other church organizations regionally. There is no budget for women's projects. So, when you implement some of the programs - it's mixed groups again. You are saying you're trying to emphasize the needs of women, trying to be more gender aware, but it creates a problem....There are programs made for the mixed groups. Then when it comes to women, it's like because of maybe exposure, more training, men are more likely to be forthcoming than women. Women get left out of the process (Ibid).

So until this larger issue is resolved there is an important role for CWC to play. Although the organization has in many ways been subsumed under CADEC it still is the only WID organization within the Catholic church. Interestingly its director was not a vocal advocate of women's rights and seemingly has accepted the status quo and is happy to lead women to CADEC without questioning its policies as my informant within CADEC is doing. This is merely an observation, not a criticism. Mrs. C is a pragmatist. She is very devoted to addressing women's issues. She has just chosen to go about it in a work-with-what-you-have manner. Under her leadership CWC is helping Zimbabwean women address meeting some of their basic needs and solving some of their immediate problems. While Mrs. M is more of a visionary and

is working to solve the larger structural issues which contribute to women's problems. Together they are a formidable pair.

The Ruwadzano/Manyano of the Methodist Church

The women's group of the Methodist church in Zimbabwe calls itself the Ruwadzano/Manyano Movement. Ruwadzano and Manyano mean fellowship or meeting in the Shona and Ndebele languages respectively. This organization is one of only two of all the groups I studied which had a written history. that document, "Methodist Women for Christ" was written as part of its centenary celebration in 1991. As is clear in the booklet's introduction, although African-voice historical accounts are rare, the churches were African right from birth.

> The missionaries (for the Ruwadzano/Manyano, particularly the deaconesses) were essential; but they were not as central to the story as at one time might have been thought. They were, as it were, the midwives of the church. When we come to write the story of this birth we read and quote from the reports of the midwives because these are the only contemporary reports we have; but we are to remember that the real story is focussed on the mother and her children (The Ruwadzano/Manyano History Committee, 1991).

Unlike the Christian women's organizations not affiliated with churches, the church women's groups are almost as old as the churches themselves. And although missionary wives were sometimes involved in the early days of the groups, their influence was limited. These organizations are as indigenous as those created in independent Zimbabwe.

> The centrality of the experience of the women and the uniqueness of the movement which is recorded in the following history is expressed in the words of Mrs. Gladys Chirisa:
> "The Ruwadzano/Manyano Movement is one of the movements that has its roots and identity in Africa. It has no counterpart in the Methodist in Britain" (Ibid, p 4).

The first Methodist missionaries to Zimbabwe came from South Africa. They were British and were accompanied by African evangelists. This was in 1891. Records of their earliest efforts indicate two things significant to my study. Those are that women responded to those efforts and that education was a component of the early work. Following is part of a letter recorded in the Ruwadzano/Manyano history booklet:

> "Quite recently I spent a day at Epworth....at seven in the morning we had our first service, about a hundred and twenty men, women and children were present....after breakfast forty or fifty adults and children sat down in groups to study the alphabet....both men and women good humouredly conning over the strange signs....occasionally the crying of a child would interrupt the studies of the mother...." (Ibid, p 8).

Clearly, women and girls were not just by-standers and they were well-represented among the first ones to be baptized. By 1893, just two years after they first arrived, the Methodist evangelists had a church with 870 members. Although there is no record of how many of those were women, it is known that "there were 295 girls in the day schools" (p 10). In that same year the evangelists' wives joined them in Zimbabwe from South Africa. With their arrival the real

work with women began. However, like the men they followed, they had a big adjustment to make first.

> What courage these women had, and loyalty, to follow their husbands to an unknown land, where they knew neither the languages nor customs and in which they were to be so cut off from their wider families, living in a strange community from which they were marked off by the language, dress, faith and family customs! But they were at home in Zimbabwe, for they were Africans among Africans (Ibid, p 10).

By 1899 the church had expanded even further. There was an average weekly attendance of 1300 at a total of 43 different places of worship. Although, again, the numbers are not broken down by sex. However, there is a later written report of women's involvement.

> One clue is in the report of 1908 by Rev. Avon Walton who recorded that uMama (Ndebele for mother) Muyengwa Mcumbeta, sister of the late Ndebele Chief Lobengula, one of the first Methodist converts to Christianity, was leading a weekly prayer meeting for the younger women, probably in the Bulawayo area. This kind of weekly commitment was surely the kind of thing out of which the Manyano grew in Matabeleland (Ibid, p 12).

As their resources and numbers multiplied, the Methodist church began building. Meeting outdoors or in makeshift structures were replaced by brick houses of worship. Schools were built as well and education became more formalized. Because of the South African influence, where girls education was taken seriously, girls were included in those early educational plans. Also, as had taken place in South Africa, co-ed schools were instituted.

> Waddilove Training Institution was opened in 1917. It was remarkably advanced for its day, because the buildings were designed for 100 boys and 100 girls. There was no other school in the country with this kind of vision for girls' education (Ibid, p 16).

The significance of this should not be over-stated, however. As was true at most mission schools in their early days, girls' education was primarily domestic science. School girls were taught cooking, sewing and housekeeping either in preparation for marriage to the educated Christian boys or to work as domestics for the white settlers. The girls also learned to speak English, to read and write and some basic first-aid skills, however. These skills would prepare some of them to later attend the normal and nursing schools that were to be established.

The work of the British missionaries and the African evangelists continued until small churches and schools were established throughout Zimbabwe. Then in 1928, they opened the first Methodist hospital in the country. "In 1929 there were four girls in training as nurses at Waddilove Hospital" (p 19). In addition, the hospital staff did training at the secondary school; an early attempt at community health work.

> "We also teach hygiene in the school. Standard 6 and 7 do elementary First Aid and home nursing. It is our ambition to have each student make a small medicine cupboard and furnish it with a few medicines for their own home and village. This is helpful for teachers and evangelists, but the problem is expense!" (Ibid, p 19).

Women were actively involved in the rapid growth of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe from the earliest days. It was

a church which encouraged the participation of wives in church development and life. As a church which also relied heavily on African evangelists for both planting and leading churches, African women had opportunities for leadership development virtually from the beginning of the Methodist church in Zimbabwe. This open atmosphere drew large numbers of women to the denomination. What followed was "natural" according to one of its historians.

> And all the time women were meeting with women for prayers and encouragement and teaching. Though these meetings were found in many, many places and in most varied sites, they arose out of the local situation and local needs and under local leadership. There was no actual organization attached to them, no national or circuit order. These regular meetings happened because it was natural for women to meet with women to share their faith (Ibid, p 21).

The formalization of the movement was heavily influenced by the Women's Prayer Union in South Africa. The South African fellowship had also begun by women meeting informally for prayer in various parts of the country. But over time that informality evolved and the movement grew in size and strength.

> In the years prior to 1905 in various circuits in Natal, the Transvaal and Swaziland women's prayer meetings had started quite spontaneously, and the only link between them was the fact that they had all chosen Tuesdays as their own day of meeting. After some years a need was felt for the participants to meet each other and share with each other what they were doing. A Rev. W.G. Mtembu arranged such a "get-together" at Verdrict in the Transvaal on 12th July 1905. This was an all-African meeting and an all-African committee was elected (Ibid, p 21).

Since there was much informal movement between South Africa and Zimbabwe in those days, it is not surprising that the idea of the prayer union moved north with the people.

> In 1918 the first formal meeting to organise such a fellowship was held at the home of Rev John and Emma White at Waddilove. Those who gathered there agreed to establish a Women's Prayer Union/Manyano in the circuits (Ibid, p 23).

Although Mrs. White hosted that preliminary meeting, the rest of the list of names of foundation members are all African and the author felt compelled to say:

> And it cannot be over-emphasised that, wherever organisational ideas and information came from, it was the women of Southern Africa who gave their Movement the unique qualities of Africanness which are so cherished today (Ibid, pp 22-23).

Over the next few years those women worked diligently to extend the scope of the prayer unions. Each group was headed by the minister's wife with the evangelist's wife as union secretary. Unlike most of the other organizations that I studied, membership in the Ruwadzano/Manyano was always closely tied to a particular church.

> According to the minutes of the 1922 Synod those desiring to become members had to be "on trial" for a period before being confirmed as "full members". Members on trial were to receive cards which stated they were still on trial members of the Movement. But, of course, they could not be bloused (see later) before they had entered the life of the church and become full members of the church itself (Ibid, p 24).

Since membership in the fellowship was dependent upon membership in the church, it is not surprising that the organization's early work was primarily evangelizing and

Christian education. This is probably related to the fact that the early leadership, and many of its members were the wives of ministers, evangelists and lay leaders. The women of the Ruwadzano/Manyano can claim much responsibility for increasing the Methodist Church membership in Zimbabwe. Because as the leaders of the women's movement reached out to other women, they not only brought them into their fellowship but into the church. And, of course, women brought their children, and sometimes husbands, in as well.

By 1937 there were 245 branches of the Movement with 2,137 full members and 1,742 members-in-training. This is fairly remarkable progress when viewed in the context of the overall missionary endeavor in the country. Although various mission bodies began work in Zimbabwe in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, only small numbers of African Christians were to be found there as late as the 1920s. The success of the Methodist Church as compared to others was clearly linked to their strategy of woman-to-woman evangelizing.

However, I hesitate to use the term "strategy" when referring to the woman-to-woman evangelizing of the women's fellowship because it was probably not planned by the church hierarchy or the mission board. Nonetheless, the church reaped the rewards of the women's efforts. Although all churches used missionary wives and ministers' wives to minister to the women and children, the Methodist Church had

an organization within its structure that was by and for women. Mission bodies tended to reach out to men first, via the formal leadership structure in a community and to children secondly, through the provision of schools. The Ruwadzano/Manyano movement and other church women's fellowships filled the void of outreach directly to women.

As mentioned already, in addition to evangelizing, the group's early work included Christian education. It also had another component which was very attractive to Zimbabwean women, namely adult education.

> There is more to the Ruwadzano/Manyano than the uniform and weekly prayer meetings. The Movement has always given high priority to the training of women in Christian living and strongly supported all attempts to improve the education of women. For instance, one of the main problems encountered in the early years was the high rate of illiteracy among women.
>
> Over the years the Ruwadzano/Manyano Movement established patterns of assembly within which women could receive training, as well as have the opportunity to widen their experience and understanding of what Christian commitment is, to deepen their spiritual lives and to provide opportunity for evangelistic endeavour. These forms of assembly include Bible Schools and Conventions, Conferences and Training Courses (Ibid, p 31).

This method of combining spiritual and intellectual development for women has been maintained by the Ruwadzano/Manyano and other Christian women's organizations quite successfully. In the early days, in the Methodist Church, this combined educational work was done through

"Bible Schools". These schools were actually mobile training efforts by and for women.

> In 1933 Sister Muriel Pratten introduced the idea of regular training courses and the holding of Bible schools. In 1934 she arranged short courses at Circuit level for the training of chairwomen. The first major Bible School was held at Epworth in 1945. Each of the eight Mashonaland circuits sent five delegates to this School. The experience proved so valuable for the delegates that they asked for a school to be held in the year following. Four of these delegates later became local preachers. The demand spread like wildfire (Ibid, p 31).

Because of her work, Mrs. Pratten was hired as a full-time, paid church worker in 1948. When she retired three years later, she was replaced by an African woman, Mrs. Maruva. Through the efforts of Mrs. Maruva and others, the Bible School system continued to grow and spread over the next two decades.

> A further innovation took place in 1963 when the District was divided into four areas - Marandellas (Marondera), Selukwe (Shurugwi), Bulawayo and Salisbury (Harare). Each area then had an Area Ruwadzano/Manyano President and Secretary. Area Bible Schools were also introduced with the help of deaconesses (Ibid, p 33).

Up until the mid-nineteen-seventies, this unique training effort grew as participants in the Bible schools returned to their own communities and trained others. Then things slowed down due to the war. Christian girls and women were not exempt from the effects of the liberation struggle.

> During the period of the Liberation War, in 1977, a Bible School was held at Rainham farm, outside Harare. A great deal was said about the Girls' Christian Union, and about pressures on the girls to "go over the border" to join the freedom

> fighters. Some of them were abducted and the mothers were very anxious. In 1979 war made it impossible to hold Bible Schools except in Harare in Bulawayo. However, in 1980 and 1981 the work began to revive...(Ibid, p 34).

It is important to emphasize that the training done through the Bible schools was more than Christian education as it is narrowly defined, meaning Christian theology and values. There were practical components in the Ruwadzano/Manyano training from the start.

> Right from the earliest days, not only was training given in "the things of the Spirit", but also in every aspect of living that concerned women. Training was included in every convention and Bible school and in many specially arranged courses. As already mentioned, from 1891, even until the end of the Second World war one of the main problems was that most of the women were illiterate. This included most of the leaders. It was difficult to teach someone who could not read. So, from early days, the Movement has strongly supported all attempts to improve the education of women (Ibid, p 38).

By the 1980's, the curriculum included studies in: family planning, family relationships, practical craft skills, organizational skills, health issues, community service and social issues in addition to issues of the church and faith. "The training methods used included group discussions, role play, lectures by experts and practical work" (Ibid, p 39). Today, educating women continues to be a priority. And even those unable to attend a convention, workshop or training session benefit. A part of each weekly meeting is set aside for a presentation on a particular topic. Speakers are invited and according to my informant

they could be "any learned person. Not (just) church people. Government men or women and people from NGOs" (interview transcript, p 3). Some of the topics covered in the weekly prayer meetings have included health issues, AIDs, the inheritance laws and development projects.

In addition to education and training for women, the Ruwadzano/Manyano has always had a strong emphasis on service. This is considered a core Christian value by Zimbabwean women and those in the Methodist church take it very seriously.

> A study of the Ruwadzano Card, so cherished by every Ruwadzano/Manyano member, reveals the essential feature of service. Take the aim of the Ruwadzano/Manyano which reads as follows: "To carry on Christian work among women, and to further in every possible way the work of the Church"...Christian service is one of the basic expressions of action in the Movement. Mention has already been made of the "strong two-fold cord" of red and white strands which symbolise prayer and service respectively (The Ruwadzano/Manyano History Committee, 1991, p 45).

The services to the church provided by the women's fellowship are quite extensive. Some of those services are: visiting the sick; collecting and distributing food, clothes and money to the needy; providing moral and material support to families planning weddings or funerals; providing elderly people with material necessities and companionship; assisting the disabled with cash and other donations through organizations that work with them; assisting with drought relief; taking care of church buildings grounds; providing financial assistance for church activities, retired

ministers and ministers' widows; assisting girls and young women to continue their educations; and, last but not least, providing spiritual services. These last two deserve further discussion.

Working with younger women and girls is crucial for obvious reasons. One advantage that church-affiliated Christian women's organizations have over the non-denominational organizations is easy access to girls. Since women take their children to church, the church-affiliated organizations have something of a captive audience. Through their own church attendance and involvement girls, teen-aged and young adult women see first-hand the benefits of their mothers' and other women's participation in the fellowship. Through this informal role-modeling, the girls' interest is often captured. Utilizing their initial interest to begin to assist girls' spiritual development has a long history in the Movement. In fact, that development was such a concern by the 1930s that the idea of Girls' Christian Union began to take shape. The organization was not officially established until 1943 but, "within a year of its birth the Junior Ruwadzano/Manyano had established forty branches in eleven circuits" (p 51). It catered to girls thirteen and older. Later a Junior Girls Christian Union for nine to thirteen year olds was also established. By 1987 the combined membership of the two groups was close to 15,000. This access to a steady stream of new recruits is a definite

advantage for church-affiliated Christian women's organizations. But they take that advantage as a serious responsibility as well.

> The Movement supports the bursary fund to pay for the school fees of promising girls and expects regular reports from the headmasters. Records show the members engaged in teaching school-leavers dress making, book keeping and first aid. A cooperative for young unemployed youths was started in the Highfield Circuit by Baba and Amai Hlanganiso in which they were taught to make and market tables, chairs and lampshades (Ibid, p 49).

Also, like the women's fellowship, the girls' fellowship changes focus with changing times. In the early days the educational focus was on Bible study, domestic skills, first aid, games and music. Even the craft skills girls were taught for the purposes of home beautification and competition between chapters. But as life became more challenging and complex for people in Zimbabwe, due to the escalation of the war and later the new-found freedoms, it was clear that girls' and young women's needs changed.

> Throughout this period there were rapid social changes, brought about through growing social freedom and mobility throughout the country and, for instance, through the increasing availability of secondary education for girls. It was inevitable that there should be a growing concern among the Ruwadzano/Manyano women about what was happening to their teenage girls.
>
> In 1979 a series of seminars focussing on the experiences of teenage girls under the title of "Problems in the Home" was held in different parts of the country.
>
> This concern of the Ruwadzano/Manyano members for the proper guidance of members of the G.C.U. led to the preparation of a guide book for girls....It consisted of weekly programmes aimed at developing

> girls to be home makers and church leaders (Ibid p 51).

This last statement is quite revealing. It is clear that the Methodist women see no contradiction between being a good home maker and a leader in church. They have been able to maintain a traditional role within the family without giving up the opportunity for personal growth through their church work. The church has always been an acceptable place for women to be involved in the so-called public sphere usually reserved for men.

It is also important to point out that the service given by the Movement in the area of girls' education is just one contribution to the field. Another of the fellowship's greatest educational efforts has been for the whole community. That is the establishment and maintenance of pre-schools. As is true of other Christian women's organizations, this vital service has received both community-wide and government endorsement.

> The pioneering efforts of Sister Edna Trawford in pre-school education led the Movement to becoming involved in a vital area of community ministry. In 1973 Sister Edna started the first pre-school playground at Vavambe Church in Harare. With her help and encouragement playgroups were soon established in other parts of the country....This has become an important part of the Government's national development package, and the Ruwadzano/Manyano has taken on the responsibility of funding and running some of these playgroups (Ibid, p 49).

The other strand tied into the cord with service is prayer. The spiritual work of the women in the Ruwadzano/Manyano is an important component of their organizational philosophy.

> Prayer, growing in knowledge, being strengthened in fellowship, public and private witness to faith are all of the essence of the Ruwadzano/Manyano (Ibid, p 45).

Some of those spiritual activities include preaching, leading worship services, teaching Sunday School and mentoring women new to the faith by preparing them for church membership and supporting their spiritual development. These types of activities are unique to church-based Christian women's organizations except for that last one. They are important for a number of reasons but for this study, their major significance is the opportunities they provide women for personal growth and development.

Since the Ruwadzano/Manyano organizational structure parallels the Methodist Church structure, the women in leadership have the additional status of being the wives of the bishop, district chairmen, ministers, deacons and evangelists. Perhaps it is this which made it acceptable for women in the early days of the Movement to preach. However, other fellowship members soon followed suit and lay women preaching is now commonplace in the Methodist Church. In fact, "Most Ruwadzano/Manyano groups complain bitterly if they don't appear on the circuit preaching plan once a quarter!" (Ibid, p 46). Although the primary purpose of all this preaching and spiritual guidance is the conversion and

development of new Christians, it also affects the preachers. The women develop important skills like public speaking, program organization, teaching and leading, and important attributes like self-confidence.

Although the Ruwadzano/Manyano, like other church-affiliated women's organizations, have more of an explicitly spiritual development role as part of their mandate, they also share many things in common with those Christian women's organizations which are non-denominational or ecumenical. Some of those common areas of concentration include providing educational opportunities for women and doing community development work. What may be more surprising is that, also like the non-church organizations, the Movement is involved in the international women's network. This is in addition to their affiliation with the larger Methodist Church women's organization and ecumenical Christian women's fellowships and activities, like World Day of Prayer. The Ruwadzano/Manyano's international involvement is not limited to the church.

> The World Federation of Methodist Women has consultative status with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a Non-governmental organization (NGO) and sends representatives to any United Nations Conferences which deal with issues concerning women and children (Ibid, p 55).

On a more local level, the Ruwadzano/Manyano is an active collaborator with other women's organizations in Zimbabwe, both Christian and secular. The Methodist women's fellowship

is very large, very strong and very stable. According to my informant, the membership is 36,000 and 98% of Methodist women belong. Since women often come to the Methodist church via the evangelistic work or community outreach of the Ruwadzano/Manyano women rather than joining the church first, this is not surprising. For women, membership in the church is almost synonymous with membership in the fellowship. So for a large, vibrant church like the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe, the Movement will most likely remain strong. Also, the members' deliberate focus on girls, and access to them, makes the continued existence of the organization more secure than that of organizations not having direct and family-based links to girls.

The Ruwadzano/Manyano also has a fairly secure financial base because of its church ties. It receives money regularly from the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and it charges dues to its members. As regular church-goers, Fellowship women are used to giving part of their income, however small, to the maintenance of the church. This kind of giving is a learned value and transfers easily into a commitment taken quite seriously by those same women to support their organization financially. Those dues, though small at Z$4.50 per year, add up to quite a bit when multiplied by 36,000 women. And it is the regularity of the contributions which make them important. It is an annual income the organization as a whole can count on. Because,

remember, this is in addition to whatever they give to their local branches.

These benefits enjoyed by the Ruwadzano/Manyano of: easy recruitment through church membership; continuity through women bringing their daughters into the organization; and financial security through regular contributions from the ZCC and the members' dues are shared by the other church-affiliated women's groups I studied. Although I did not include case studies on them, I did extensive interviews with the Anglican Mother's Union and the Salvation Army Women's Program. Although these denominational women's organizations are somewhat more traditional in their outlook, they are still quite adaptable to changes in the society. And while their primary focus is on spiritual development, their continued responsiveness to their member's needs other needs is obvious. As is their desire to contribute to the broader community.

An understanding of the importance of cooperation and collaboration was obvious with all the organizational leaders I interviewed. This was impressive given the diversity of the organizations but, is also an important indication of many ideas. Those ideas include the role of culture in the organizations, an awareness of the fact that commonalities outweigh differences among Zimbabwean women, an awareness of the importance of sharing resources, an awareness of the dangers of the "divide and conquer" tactics

often used by those in power, and an awareness of each individual organization's vulnerability. This last idea is, I think, easy for the organization's leaders to grasp due to the pervasiveness of personal vulnerability as a woman in Zimbabwe (and elsewhere). Perhaps it is that very vulnerability which will continue to draw women to Christian women's organizations for support in their emotional, intellectual, material and spiritual development. And perhaps it is that the organizations do view women holistically and attempt to address their needs and issues in all those areas that will continue to make them viable.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS: PATTERNS, THEMES AND DISTINCTIONS

I went to Zimbabwe after having submerged myself in both the feminist theory and Women in Development (WID) literature and believing I had a clear understanding of a relationship between the two. However, I felt somewhat uncomfortable going to do research in Zimbabwe from the feminist perspective or theoretical framework. My discomfort was due to what I perceived as a lack of "fit" between the four major feminist theories and what I knew about women's lives in Zimbabwe. Also, it seemed that the influence of those theories on WID programs had not always been appropriate or even helpful. African feminist theory seemed more relevant but there was so much difference of opinion among those writing about it that I it did not seem possible to use it as a framework.

However, my continued conversations, observations and interactions with women in Zimbabwe helped me to realize two important things about feminist theory. One is that it was my own bias which was limiting my understanding of the term feminist and the ideas it could convey. This realization helped me to erase my long-standing and narrow image of the feminist as a white, Western, middle-class woman. The other was that African feminist theories represented such diverse ideas because Africa is so diverse. I began to understand

the importance of context in constructing theory. One fairly universal construct among African feminst theorists is opposition to the idea of a "generic African woman".

In the field I also learned that I needed to be more sensitive to what I saw and the way women said things in addition to what they said. These three readjustments in my thinking helped me to become much more comfortable in not just recording data but analyzing it and using theoretical frameworks. I also realized that the common set of beliefs and ways of understanding their world mentioned over and again by my informants could be described as a feminist theory. So that I was not just limited to the theories I had come with.

Before describing my "Zimbabwean feminist theory", I need to remind the reader that both myself and all of my informants are Christian and so although I will not consistently use the term Christian when referring to the theory, having a common faith background was significant in its development. The theory was developed by myself with the ideas conveyed by my informants. It began with the patterns that emerged from the data and then the themes I developed from those patterns. Next I put the themes together to describe the environment the women and women's organizations are situated in, as my informants see it. This last piece is most significant. Although my own interpretation of the situation is obviously present, it is not dominant.

Zimbabwean women's own thoughts, feelings and beliefs provide the major source of material for the description. Using that description, I then constructed a feminist theory situated in the Zimbabwean context.

Although each of the organizations I explored had unique histories and qualities, there were similarities as well. Also, even with some differences between women's individual situations, the lessons I learned about women in Zimbabwe revealed many important similarities among them. And lastly, not forgetting the diversity within the church too, there were shared beliefs and perceptions about it as a body. All those similarities and the commonly held perceptions that I discovered through my interviews, observations and interactions with people, I considered to be patterns. They are listed below under three categories.

Patterns

Concerning women, the patterns I saw were as follows.

1. A personal understanding of the relationship between education and effecting change.
2. They are perceived as being part of a family and community rather than in isolation.
3. The belief that women have common problems and can learn from one another.
4. The belief that women hold families and communities together.
5. The belief that projects that benefit women benefit family and community as a whole.

About the organizations, the patterns I found were as follows.

1. The organizations were started by and for women, usually African women.

2. The organizations were started to meet real needs, both spiritual and material.
3. The organizations have changed with time, usually from a relief to a development orientation.
4. There is an organizational philosophy that service is a Christian duty.
5. There is a belief in the importance of being inclusive and cooperative as women's organizations.
6. There is a focus on education in conjunction with any development activity.

About the church, the patterns were as follows.

1. A perception that it has a clear and important role to play in national development.
2. A perception that church is second only to government in its influence on people's lives.
3. A belief that women's support sustains the church.
4. A belief that the church has a responsibility not only for people's spiritual lives but for contributing to their material well-being and to social justice as well.

Themes

From the patterns that emerged when reading through my data, I developed the following three themes. The first is that many people, including both men and women, in Zimbabwe have what I have termed a woman-centered worldview. Secondly, that education is crucial to women's personal development and by extension to their ability to be involved in community development. Therefore it is a major focus of all groups working with women. Thirdly, that there is an important, long-standing and strong relationship between church and state in Zimbabwe which most people feel should be maintained. I was told repeatedly that the church is second only to the state in influence over the lives of most people in the country. The church is seen as both a partner of and a challenge to the state. Each of these themes

deserves further discussion because they are the beginning of an analysis of the data.

Women

The most important theme that evolved from the findings is what I can best describe as a women-centered worldview. In my interviews, observations, informal conversations and interactions with women, families and groups this idea emerged. There seems to be a general understanding that women are the glue that hold families and communities together. It is significant because it really goes beyond the idea of nurturing that in most societies is believed to be an inherent role for women. Instead of being just nurturing, women are perceived to be the hardest workers, the most reliable, and ultimately responsible for a family's well-being.

This perception is based on reality. There is an ever-increasing number of female-headed households in both the rural and urban areas of Zimbabwe. And even in homes where a man is present, many women are bringing in as much or sometimes more than he is. They may not be earning the same salary but women generally derive their income from a variety of sources. And in addition to the cash they contribute, women usually contribute foodstuffs that they have produced. But it is the expectation that women care for their families which helps to insure that whatever income women produce goes to the maintenance of the household.

Since the same expectation is not held about men his salary often goes elsewhere. This expectation, of women being the primary maintainers, extends out to the community. Women are expected to help neighbors in need, to help extended family including in-laws, to contribute the most to community work groups. Again part of this is simply the idea of women as nurturers which is so prevalent in most societies but, it also has to do with the myth that women have more time to give to other activities because they are not involved in formal employment and "public activities" as men are.

Clearly this woman-centered worldview has both positive and negative consequences. On the negative side it over-burdens even married women with more than half of the responsibility for maintaining a family. Also it leads to the double work day syndrome. It frees men to spend both their time and money outside the family/household. On the positive side this idea gives women a great deal of informal power. It is informal in the sense that in a household where a man is present, he is the head of that household. He owns the property and makes the decisions. But in reality, women usually make the day-to-day decisions in a family/household. Unfortunately they do not have the same access men have so carrying out decisions is another matter. In the community as well women have informal power through the contributions they make and the relationships they maintain. Since

relationships are so important in Zimbabwean society, women's networks can be very powerful.

This theme was an important finding from my study because their understanding of the power of networking is one factor that keeps women interested in women's organizations. Women also understand that those organizations are one way for them to gain formal power; both within an organization itself and, through the organizations, in the larger society by the changes that women's groups are helping to bring about.

Education

The second major theme running through my findings was the importance of education to women, and by extension their families and communities. Lack of education was seen as a major barrier to women's development and community development as well. Due to Zimbabwe's colonial history, Blacks always - up until independence - had far less access to education and Black women and girls even less than their menfolks. Organizations like the ones in my study were often the only resource available for learning for African women and girls. Although independence has brought incredible positive change in educational opportunities for African boys and girls, adults have not benefitted to the same degree. And so even in the post-independence era education for adult women has been largely available due to NGOs in general and Christian women's organizations in particular.

All of the organizations included in the study place a priority on education. While the type of education varied considerably, the commitment to it was consistently high. The original founders and current leaders of the groups are well-aware that women often lack educational opportunities and that education is key to personal and community development. The organizational leadership is also aware that education needs to be relevant and practical. Concrete links between learning and life were emphasized by all my informants. For example, the type of education they believed is currently most critical for women in Zimbabwe is legal education. Something that would probably not be recognized as an educational priority by an outsider.

The Church

The third theme had to do with the role of the church in society. People in Zimbabwe have very clear ideas about this. First of all there is a widely-held belief that the church is second only to the government both in terms of influence on people and in terms of responsibility for people. Since the church was closely linked with the state since colonial times this is understandable. And since the state controls all the other institutions which might have a large impact on people, like the educational system through university, it makes sense for Zimbabweans to hold this belief. One advantage of this is the idea is that there is something providing checks and balances on the state.

Another advantage is that the state has a natural partner in development but a partner with a different ideology. So in addition to checks and balances it provides an alternative.

As I touched on in the history section of this chapter, because of the church's early involvement in community development, it is viewed as a helping institution. This view is shared by both church members and non-members. Christians in leadership believe that serving others is a basic Christian responsibility. Members of the general public seem to agree and so have an expectation that if they go to the church with a need it will be met.

As the church has grown and evolved, its leadership has attempted to separate the spiritual from the secular somewhat. But with the non-spiritual activity of the church being handled separately complications have arisen. The branches of the church actively engaged in development work are trying to do sustainable development and encourage self-reliance rather than giving hand-outs as it did before. This refusal to give - except in disaster or emergency situations - is viewed negatively by some. This change in strategy has been brought about to a large extent by economic realities. However this is not known by the general public. Christian women's organizations have tried to build a bridge between relief and development, using education and role modeling. They have been most successful in helping Zimbabweans adjust to this change within the church from helping people be

participants in positive change rather than recipients of largess.

Together the three major themes of the woman-centered worldview, the importance of education in development and the central role of the church in society weave together nicely into what appears like a colorful tapestry.

And it looks like this. Around the edges, framing the picture is the state in relationship with the church. For a variety of significant historical, political and cultural reasons those two entities are the major influences on the lives of virtually all Zimbabweans. Since the state controls other entities which in some societies offer an alternate perspective, such as the media and the university, the church in Zimbabwe is the alternative. This is not to say that there is no critical voice within academia or the media, there is. But it is constrained much more than the church due to the almost universal support and involvement of the populace with the church in comparison with the relative isolation of the grassroots from academia and the media. Nor is this to say that the church never agrees with nor supports the state. It frequently does. But it is not much of an exaggeration to say that when a loud voice speaks out about something the government or party is doing, it is usually the church. Just as when the government needs assistance, it is usually the church to which it turns.

The inside of the tapestry is more complex and subtle. There are the various ethnic groups and the rivalry between the major ones. There are the many communities, urban and rural, distinctive yet closely linked in every way. Within those communities there is development going on and opportunities for involvement. Access to that involvement is controlled by many things; not the least of which is one's level of education.

Then there are households within those communities but with family networks reaching across them. And throughout the picture are women, everywhere. It may seem that they are small and insignificant, but in fact they are the strongest threads in the tapestry.

Zimbabwean Feminist Theory

So it was in using this tapestry as my new lens that I saw from the data that there is something that could be described as Zimbabwean feminism, in spite of the fact that most Zimbabwean women would say "no" if asked whether they are feminists. When I use the word feminist to talk about Zimbabwean women and their organizations, I mean simply a woman-centered perspective and movement for social change. That the movement is based on theory seems to be borne out by the commonalities among such a diverse group of organizations. This is why I developed the theory. I thought it would help explain why I believe the philosophies and activities of the Zimbabwean women's own organizations are

most the appropriate. My theory is situationally based and the situation it is based on is one articulated by those living it.

The components of Zimbabwean feminism are as follows: a belief in a woman's worth as a child of God; a belief that women's rights are human rights; a belief that women have proved themselves; a belief that women are the backbone of society; a belief that women can and should help and support one another; and, a belief that women already know a lot, are capable of learning more, and therefore are a good investment. I will discuss each some detail.

The first is central and a good example of the specific history from which Zimbabwean feminism grew. Even prior to the coming of Christian missionaries, Zimbabweans were religious people. They had well-developed religious systems which met people's spiritual needs. Most ethnic groups practiced a monotheistic religion which later assisted in their understanding and acceptance of the new faith. Additionally, religion was closely tied to other important aspects of life and continues to be, in spite of the change from traditional to Christian beliefs.

Christianity taught that men and women are equal before God. But at the same time, the missionaries' own lives illustrated that men and women have different roles to play. This was in line with traditional beliefs and so was easy for new converts to accept. However, women learned to value

their roles and contributions. They began to believe that those were as important as men's. They drew strength from the belief that God valued them equally even though their lot in life was vastly different than men's. Societal changes have not diminished how most women value traditional female roles like wife, mother and homemaker. However, valuing those roles because of their spiritual beliefs is a foundation stone of Zimbabwean feminism.

The second component is very much related to the first. Zimbabwean women are expressing their growing assurance that their equality in the sight of God means they should be treated with equally by men. That assurance leads to the second component, which is the belief that women's rights are not special privileges for women. In fact, they are just the opposite. Women in Zimbabwe are not asking to be treated in a special way. They are asking to be treated as adults, as men are. So the phrase "women's rights are human rights", which has become something of a cliche, is very real for them. For Zimbabwean women, it means simply extending basic human rights to women.

The third component of my theory is that Zimbabwean women feel they have proved themselves. This is one of the components directly related to political history and therefore one that makes this feminism uniquely Zimbabwean. Women feel they have proved themselves on two levels. One is as active participants in the creation of their nation and

the other is as equal partners with the men in their lives. So both personally and politically, Zimbabwean women believe they have earned the right to be heard and responded to. Although women participated in wars of liberation in many countries at many times, the situation in Zimbabwe was unusual. Women participated in every aspect of the war against the minority white regime. Some stayed home and participated by feeding, clothing and sheltering the soldiers. Others left home and acted as spies and messengers. And still others actually fought as soldiers themselves. Some even left the country for training in neighboring African states and overseas.

Even women who did not choose to be directly involved in the struggle nevertheless suffered for it. Since the war mainly took place in the rural areas and the population there, then as now, was mainly women, they suffered large casualties as well as much abuse from fighters on all sides. After the war, women continued to support the new government by being very politically active in the various parties, particularly the one now in power. Women's grassroots organizing is largely responsible for the party's popularity in the rural areas since independence. This loyalty to Mugabe's government and party by women is most likely one reason for the major legal changes that have been instituted in their favor. To now ask that those changes be enforced is

well within women's rights from their perspective of having "paid their dues".

The fourth component of my Zimbabwean feminist theory is related to the previous one. Women not only believe they are the staunchest supporters of the state but, that they are the staunchest supporters of the institutions that make up the civil society. Those institutions are the family and the church. Zimbabwean women very confidently say that they hold families together in their society.

Even while acknowledging that men hold the formal power in families, men and women both admit that women make most key decisions and it is their commitment that keeps the family together. It is also their commitment which gives them the energy to work long hours and put up with daily difficulties in order to provide for the family. It is not unusual for Zimbabwean women to work two or three jobs; to be involved in both the formal and informal employment sectors. And in addition to providing much of the financial support for her family, she provides most of the emotional support as well. It is women who care for children and parents and sick or destitute relations (both her husband's and her own). It is women who in the little time left over are most involved in community organizations, especially the church.

The next component is also tied to the previous one. It is through extended family and community institutions like

the church that women form most of their relationships. They have learned through these formal and informal associations that their individual "heavy loads" are shared in common with other women. They have learned also the value of getting and giving support to and from those other women. This idea of the importance of solidarity among women is the fifth component. And one that women are becoming increasingly conscientized about. Previously, women were deliberately set against one another. This divide and conquer tactic is common in patriarchal societies. Married women pitted against single women; daughters-in-law against mothers-in-law; Catholic women against Protestant. But Zimbabwean women are learning that "strength in numbers" is something men have always used to retain power and are now using it themselves.

Building on that lesson is the sixth component. It is that women already have a great deal of knowledge to share with one another. Through their various activities, women have participated in more informal education than they previously realized. They have many skills and experiences to draw from and build on. Upon those skills and knowledge gained through practical experiences, women can begin to learn even more. The traditional under-valuation of their activities and knowledge is being questioned by women. This challenge has laid a foundation for women's keen interest in non-formal education programs.

The women I talked to have a compassionate understanding of the complex interplay of gender, race, history and culture in the oppression they live under. This compassionate understanding, however, does not keep them from questioning and challenging the oppression. Rather, it gives them the strength to do so. I believe both the compassion for and challenge to their oppressors is due in part to Zimbabwean women's spirituality. And, that their spirituality is derived from a combination of their history, culture and religion. So the situation specificity of my Zimbabwean feminist theory is what makes it meaningful. And why I believe that if I read it back to my informants, they would say, "Yes! that's my life, that's our reality.".

The ideas shared with me by the leaders of the organizations featured in this study are based on a growing consciousness among Zimbabwean women; a feminist consciousness which includes an understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, sources of oppression, and best ways to overcome that oppression.

Christian Women's Organizations

Zimbabwean women realize they are at the very center of their world and yet often not in control of it. So from that position, they reach out to each other through the various organizations described in Chapter Five. What they have found is help in every area of their lives. As is clear from the data presented in the previous chapter, indigenous

Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe are diverse and vibrant. That these organizations make a positive difference in women's lives is apparent, particularly if one re-reads their stories using Zimbabwean feminism as a framework. Without it, it would be easy to dismiss these organizations as provincial. They are anything but that. However, they do represent a wide spectrum of ideas about women's roles.

The similarities of the organizations have been discussed in some detail. However, it is equally important to point out the differences among them. The clearest way to illustrate the differences is to use categories. There are several variables one could use to categorize the women's organizations. One of the most interesting, however, is their relationship to the church as an institution. At one end of the spectrum are those women's organizations that are a part of a particular denomination. At the other end would be the ecumenical women's NGOs. The church-affiliated women's groups are the most traditional. That is they have not changed much over the years. Their target group is married women and a major goal is assisting women to be good wives and mothers. There other work is welfare oriented more than developmental. That is they assist poor people with donations of food, clothing and even sometimes money. They work mostly with orphans, refugees, disabled people and other vulnerable groups. In addition to material assistance to the poor, these organizations have a strong spiritual

focus. Their weekly meetings are essentially prayer meetings. Women pray, sing and study the Bible together. They encourage one another to grow strong in their Christian faith and they go out and preach to others. These organizations were started by missionaries' wives often as early as a church was established. They still have counterparts in European churches. Although according to a couple of my informants the Zimbabwean groups are stronger and the British groups only have elderly members! The Anglican Mother's Union is a good example of organizations at this end of the spectrum.

Women's organizations at the other end of the spectrum target all women, single and married, young and old. Their work is developmental rather than welfare oriented. It is not about helping the less fortunate so much as helping people to help themselves. These organizations are ecumenical and were started by black Zimbabwean women around the time of independence. All of these factors probably played a role in determining their focus which is the political, social and economic empowerment of women. Their primary activities include advocacy, leadership development, training. The Zimbabwe Women's Bureau is a good example of the organizations at this end of the spectrum.

In the middle there are non-denominational groups such as the Young Women's Christian Association. These organizations were often started by African women from

nearby Zambia and South Africa. They were originally urban-oriented and often targeted single women. They started after World War II and gained strength during the re-emergence of the nationalist struggle in southern Africa. These organizations concentrate on both welfare and developmental work. They are particularly interested in helping women become more productive and more independent economically. So they focus on income-generating projects, education and appropriate technology.

There are some organizations which do not fit neatly into any of the three categories discussed. The Methodist church women's movement for example is affiliated to a particular denomination and has the characteristics of those groups. However, it was not started by missionaries but by Zimbabwean women who experienced the movement in South Africa and brought the idea back.

To categorize the organizations requires making generalizations but they are helpful in illustrating the diversity of Christian women's groups and how various factors affects their focus, goals and target group(s). In the table below, WHY indicates the group's goal and WHAT indicates its focus. WHO indicates the background of the founders and WHERE indicates where it falls in relationship to any particular denomination of the Christian church. WHEN indicates the time period during which the organization was founded.

A TYPOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

WHO	Foreign	African	Indigenous
WHERE	Church-affiliated		Ecumenical
WHEN	Pre-independence (20's - 50's)	"Struggle" (50's - 70')	Independence (1979 -85)
WHY	Welfare	Development	Empowerment
WHAT	Spiritual	Social	Political/ economic

Many Zimbabwean belong to more than one Christian women's organizations. Perhaps because, as the preceding discussion shows, different types of groups meet different needs.

One last interesting category cannot be put on the chart because it is not a Christian women's organization. Rather it is an organization of Christians working together through a secular NGO. This means that in Zimbabwe even organizations which are not explicitly Christian are sometimes de facto Christian. The best example of that would be ORAP, the Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress. ORAP was founded at independence and currently works mostly in Matabeleland. As mentioned, an area that was for many years severely neglected in national development efforts. ORAP has stepped in and made a tremendous difference. The rumor is that it is so well-respected its dynamic founder and executive director can afford to turn

away donations which come with unacceptable strings attached.

I spent three days in an "ORAP village" observing. ORAP has an excellent reputation as being a truly grassroots, democratic, participatory and inclusive development organization. But I was still not prepared for what I saw. Membership in ORAP is open to any adult in a community. In the village I visited there were men and women of all ages involved. Like in most community groups, women were well-represented. What was striking, however, was the way women participated. The board of directors is about equally mixed with men and women and the participants ranged in age from about mid-twenties to fifty. A woman is the head of the group and the other women participate fully. And not just in the work but, in the decision-making. What was most interesting was the way the men and women interacted. During a meeting both men and women presented information and answered questions. I had never seen women speak up like that in a mixed-gender group before. The other interesting thing I observed was men helping with typically female duties, like preparing food for guests.

At the beginning of this section, I referred to ORAP as an example of a de facto Christian organization. In its literature, ORAP does not describe itself as Christian even implicitly. However, all their meetings are started with prayers and punctuated with songs, most of which were

Christian hymns. Perhaps the most exciting of all the unusual behavior I observed was women leading a Sunday morning worship service. Although we were outside and not in a church, it was still unusual for a woman to not only lead the singing and prayer but to preach. That women are at the forefront of the church and the church at the forefront of community development, was probably most strikingly illustrated during my brief visit with this "secular" Zimbabwean NGO. What I saw there raises interesting questions about the role of the institutional church in circumscribing gender roles.

This study endeavored to answer the question of women's increased participation in development through their involvement in Christian women's organizations. As was shown, numerical data specifically and written data in general was not usually available. But the organizations' impact was nonetheless obvious. Women's involvement in development and access to its benefits were definitely enhanced by participation in Christian women's organizations.

Women in Zimbabwe are still struggling for equality and given the trying economic times that struggle is compounded by the scramble for scarce resources. One of the most important findings of my research is women's increased consciousness about their situation, its underlying causes and how to improve it. Their major strategies seem to be

personal self-development and working together. These two things are not at all contradictory. As is true in many African cultures, Zimbabweans see themselves not primarily as individuals but in relationship to other people. So it is natural that women are joining forces as they endeavor to learn more and improve their lives. They are doing this primarily through the institution in which they have long found a warm welcome, the church and particularly through women's organizations.

Summary

To summarize, the Christian women's organizations I looked at are unique in two important ways. One is that women run them and the other is that their organizational mission statements are based on a Christian philosophy. The important thing is that those various statements really affect the organizations' operations including staffing, funding, programming, and management. For example, staff often make personal sacrifices to keep the organizations going, or the organization may turn down funding from a donor which requires them to do something against their beliefs.

The other unique feature, the fact that they are headed by women is also significant. The women I interviewed, although better educated and middle-class, live in the same reality as the women their organizations serve. Some of them were kind enough to share personal stories which made that

very clear. This means they have real empathy for the women of Zimbabwe and a realistic view of their issues and needs. Also, these women leaders can be role models for younger women. Also, they are effective advocates for women with the government. These are all invaluable results of Zimbabwean women heading their own organizations.

There are advantages and disadvantages to what makes these organizations different. Some of the disadvantages are the almost constant financial insecurity that most of them live with and the over-whelming demand on them for help and services. Some of the advantages are that: scarce resources are well-spent; programs are planned that Zimbabwean women want, rather than what someone else thinks they need; programs are evaluated in a more meaningful, if less conventional way; staff stay with their organizations out of personal commitment, giving continuity and stability; and, young women are attracted into the organizations keeping them going and changing.

The church leadership in Zimbabwe and internationally are aware of and supportive of the work of these organizations. They show that support by giving financial support as well with human resources. It is that support, combined with the competency and tenacity of the organizational heads, that allow the groups to work. Their work provides Zimbabwean women with opportunities for education and training they would often not have access to

otherwise. The training in turn leads to opportunity for leadership development which leads to opportunity for participation at the decision-making level within the church at large. This further strengthens women's chances of accessing and benefitting from development activities because more and more women are finding themselves in a position to advocate for others.

These organizations have a potential that has not yet been reached. Although they are stretched to the limit, they continue to reach out and to respond to the various needs of the women of Zimbabwe. When I asked what type of support they would be interested in from outside, my informants were very concrete. They said they do not just want funds, they want friends. They want donors who can support their philosophy, their way of doing things, the type of things they are doing, their capabilities and the knowledge of their membership about their own situation and priorities.

By supporting their philosophy, this does not mean they would not accept funding from secular donor agencies. Perhaps respect is a better word that support. The women I spoke with want funders who are willing to share ideas and to take them seriously as an equal. They realize their organizations also have something to give in return and are very interested in dialogue with other groups. Many of these women's organizations are already working to become more involved in regional and international efforts at addressing

the needs of women. Perhaps it is through those fora that they will gain greater recognition and support outside Zimbabwe and outside the church.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

The beliefs I had about the heavy involvement of the church in development in Zimbabwe and women's active participation in the church were confirmed through my research. However, I think that my perception that such involvement was unseen and unappreciated was inaccurate. What gives that impression is that the church is such a part of many people's everyday lives that its work is almost transparent. People **expect** the church to help them. That is what its role is in most people's mind. As the church continues to move away from relief assistance to development work the expectation has not lessened, although it is changing.

Perhaps for a few euphoric years after independence Zimbabweans expected the government to begin to meet their needs. However, it soon became apparent that the government could not do everything. So people turned back to the church and the two, church and government, work together to try and meet people's needs. This is the reality and it is appreciated by both the government and the citizenry.

Women's active participation within the church is also taken as a given. "Everybody knows that", I was told. Everybody knows that women are not only the majority in the church, but the energy that keeps it running. Although the church could be considered a "patriarchal institution", in

that formal leadership is still largely male, there is a definite parallel power structure among women. And, that "woman power" is not only informal. Women hold significant leadership positions within the church even though they are under-represented within the clergy. Rather than being marginalized within the church, women are highly respected for their myriad contributions. It is one place where they can often use their gifts to reach their full potential, specifically through gaining access to opportunities, at all age levels, to increase their skills and knowledge and develop positive attributes like self-confidence.

As is true in most of the rest of the world, however, women are still only a very small percentage of the clergy. Although most churches in Zimbabwe do ordain women as ministers, few women pastors exist. There are a variety of reasons for this including: less access to education; fewer role models; economic realities; demands of the job; and societal attitudes.

The importance of Christian women's organizations in the church's development efforts and in women's lives was clarified through the study. The reasons for the popularity of these organizations is simply that they have much to offer women. They provide women all kinds of opportunities for personal and economic development. They also provide vital social services for women and their families such health care, child care, relief assistance and

counseling. Due to the wide variety of activities and services of these organizations, women from all walks of life are involved. These organizations cut across class lines in a way secular organizations cannot. As the church long ago provided a refuge for women, today these organizations do the same.

Today's stresses are very different and more complex for women, but the spiritual renewal received through weekly meetings is just as effective for many. That, coupled with the practical resources offered by the organizations such as training, advocacy, and income-generating opportunities, makes participation in Christian women's organizations an invaluable part of many women's lives.

Christian women's organizations also make a great contribution to society in general. The major contributions include the provision of much of the day care available in the country, particularly that which is free or inexpensive and in the rural areas. They provide much of the adult education, particularly literacy and skills training, available to people outside the formal school system and again in the rural areas especially. They coordinate much of the income-generating activity that women have access to. And lastly, they provide much of the relief assistance given in times of disaster, like war and drought, or when people are experiencing personal difficulty like after the death of a spouse. Obviously, all these contributions are especially

important for women. One last important role of the Christian women's organizations is that they have provided much of the female leadership in the country. Many of the women in the government, the civil service and the professions, got their early training from membership in a women's club. These groups not only provide on-going emotional and spiritual support for those women leaders but also give them continued access to grassroots women. In other words, women don't outgrow the women's organizations, they just evolve in their involvement. They are able to give something back but also continue learning through keeping connected and in touch with other women as they move up in their profession or in politics. This is something men do not have access to and may be the cause of male politicians often being out of touch with grassroots realities.

My general area of inquiry had two parts to it: do Christian women's organizations contribute to the community development work of the church; and, are they positioned to facilitate women benefitting from those development activities? The above discussion on the organization's contributions makes it clear that the answer to both queries is yes. The women's organizations are a critical component of the church's community development work. For example, one major area of involvement is initiating income-generating projects. Although many are not financial successes, they can and do contribute to community development in other

ways. The IGPs that do not succeed fail for the same reasons that those initiated by secular development programs fail. Those reasons are poor planning, inadequate follow-up and mismanagement. Also, like other "failed" IGPs, these projects fail only in that they do not generate income. However, they do generate other positive outcomes. Those include: bringing community members together; teaching practical skills; conscientizing people; facilitating creativity and problem-solving; generating enthusiasm and confidence to try new things; and, initiating connections between communities and donors.

In addition to income-generating projects, Christian women's organizations contribute to community development by facilitating group work projects. These might be community gardens, day care centers, bakeries or brick-molding projects. The fruits of these labors, rather than attempting to generate income, meet a material need within the community. So with a little seed money from the organization, those who contribute labor reap the benefits of a better diet, a new home or a few hours free from child care.

The last and perhaps most important way Christian women's organizations contribute to community development is in the area of education. Although it has been touched on above, it deserves elaboration. Since independence the government has taken over the management of most schools in

the formal school system. The government made a real commitment to education for all and has made great gains in a short time. In spite of that, however, the government encouraged continued community participation in education. Church leaders, both men and women, are often at the forefront of that involvement; and with good reason, since the Christian church in Zimbabwe was the first provider of education of any kind for most Africans. Currently, its heaviest involvement is in the area of non-formal education both for adults and young school-leavers.

That provision of educational opportunities for adults is invaluable in a country where many adults never had the opportunity for formal education as children. That lack of opportunity for education as a child is most prevalent among women. Providing access to education for women is a major contribution of the church and occurs mostly under the auspices of the type of women's organizations described in my study.

Examining and describing the impact of those organizations as providers of education and training for Zimbabwean women was one of the most significant outcomes of this study, particularlly since it has not been well-documented previously. As discussed earlier in this paper, most of these organizations do not have written accounts of either their histories or their current activities. Their contribution, therefore, often goes unrecognized outside

Christian circles and outside Zimbabwe. This in turn leads to a lack of support. Although the Zimbabwean government supports the work of these groups, it does not do so with dollars. The government continues to support only public educational efforts and mainly the formal system which does not cater well for adults.

The policy implications of the study, therefore, are clear. These organizations should receive financial support from the government. The work they do is not a duplication of government efforts. It is significantly different and very important, because educating adults in practical areas may be more immediately and directly effective for development than educating young people for more education (which is what the formal school system does). It is also clear that leaving a large percentage of the citizenry, that is adult women, uneducated and/or untrained is a waste of human resources which has serious consequences. With regular financial support from the government, Christian women's organizations could make a greater contribution to national development.

These organizations have already proven themselves both competent and trustworthy. They have already accomplished a great deal on very limited budgets. With more resources they could improve and expand the educational services they now provide. There are several reasons to support that this investment would have a positive outcome. Some of these are

as follows: the organizations already have access to and the trust of grassroots people; they have strong networks and decentralized organizational structures; they have made a commitment to participatory methods which work well with adults and make the best use of resources; and, they often link education with development projects. Lastly, although these organizations are supportive of the government, they are very well-established in their own right as separate entities. So, because of the strong, positive reputations they have, they could continue to attract students without being seen as part of the government, even if partially funded by it. This might be important for some participants as well as for other funders.

However, there are certainly disadvantages to the women's organizations accepting government funding which need to be addressed. For some organizations those might be: an inability to manage large sums of money; member's negative attitudes towards the government; and too much interference in how the funds are to be spent. Possible solutions might be that only small, ear-marked grants be given and accepted. For example, providing enough funding to purchase and maintain a couple of sturdy vehicles, or providind a staff person instead of a cash grant. Most of my informants talked about lack of personnel more than lack of funds. Virtually all of these organizations are under-staffed and donor agencies almost invariably refuse to fund

salaries. However, like government cash grants, a government-paid staff member could have difficulty addressing a group's membership and would have to be sensitively integrated into a non-governmental organization.

Insofar as the significance of this study for practice, the same recommendation seems valid. Just as the government should increase and formalize their support of these organizations, the donor community should as well. For those of us who are practitioners of development, we need to look again at Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe (and probably elsewhere in Africa). Both church and secular NGOs working in development tend to work much too independently in Zimbabwe, and elsewhere. Or, if they work co-operatively it is with the national government or their own particular church (denomination). Either of these options is very limiting. Western secular and religious NGOs as well as aid agencies need to explore Christian women's organizations as possible partners.

On the other hand, as was discussed above, accepting funds or working collaboratively could be problematic for the women's organizations. One disadvantage that comes immediately to mind is the tendency of Western agencies to believe that they "know what's best". Giving up their autonomy is not worth an improved bottom line or another pair of hands. Since self-sufficiency is something these organizations preach to their members, becoming dependent on

a foreign organization, to the point where decisions are being made from somewhere else, would not be acceptable. However, if more Western agencies expressed interest in the women's organizations, the latter could then choose with whom to work. And obviously they would choose to work with groups that were sincerely interested in a partnership arrangement. As one of my informants put it, the women's groups want friends not funders.

Looking at partnership from the other side, the benefits to be gained by foreign NGOs and international donor agencies working with these types of organizations is enormous. In Chapter One, I discussed some critiques of mainstream development organizations and their work which could easily be addressed through such collaboration.

One of the major critiques mentioned was ignoring local power structures, hierarchies and leadership. One of the benefits of outside organizations working cooperatively with local church women's groups would be to have accurate information about formal and informal leadership in a community, and assistance with gaining access to that leadership. This would address two problems, namely that of who within the community to make contact with and gain access through, and that of who to hand projects over to upon the end of the terms of their own staff. This working with local leaders could also help address the problems encountered when foreign agencies try to manage often too-

large projects without adequately decentralized management. The Women's groups studied in my research could also be called upon to use their vast experience in training and leadership development to help fill any gaps in local leaders' skills.

Another major critique is a lack of understanding of and sensitivity to local reality. And related to that, an unwillingness to respect and make use of local people's knowledge. Since foreign NGOs and international agencies work all over the Third World an in-depth understanding of all the places where they work is virtually impossible. Working closely with local Christian women's groups would address this problem well. Since these local organizations would have an intimate knowledge of the national and local conditions, culture and ways of doing things.

Another critique was that foreign agencies' projects are short-term and without adequate follow-up. This is not likely to change as "projects" by their very nature are short-term and the foreign expert is not likely to make a long-term commitment to any one community. Even if one desired to do so, this is not the way development agencies work. Experts are shuffled around to best use their technical knowledge without regard to their lack of geographical knowledge. It is still presumed that a "good" project in one location will be good for others. Collaborating with local Christian women's organizations

would help in this area because they could provide follow-up for a project after the foreign staff has left and continuity from project to project.

Another important critique mentioned is that development projects often just widen the social and economic disparities in a community. Addressing this issue, the benefit of collaborating with Christian women's organizations is that they take seriously the ideologies of participatory or democratic management which many international agencies also claim allegiance to. However, in the latter case the reality is often quite different. Most Western international development agencies, both governmental and non-governmental have very top-down organizational structures. The hierarchical organizational structures of main offices are also reflected in their work in the field. Most aid agencies still rely on host country government officials to set their agendas and priorities within the already-constrained boundaries of the donor government. Most still rely on "experts" from their own countries to plan, manage and evaluate programs and projects, hiring local staff only at the lowest levels. And most still focus on men, or relegate women to "women's projects". Obviously working cooperatively with the types of organizations I described in this study would be beneficial in this area. The local women's groups plan their projects from the grassroots up, rather than from the headquarters

down. They train, hire and promote grassroots people. And from an understanding of women's critical role in society, they focus on women and consider all types of projects appropriate for women's participation.

The last critique I will address was that of foreign agencies which do not share their philosophy and/or rationale with local people. Failing to do this leads, almost inevitably, to a lack of "ownership" of a project or program, and perpetuates the idea that development is about someone coming in and "giving to" or doing for. Simply stating what an organization is going to do and not why, is to disrespect or simply ignore the possibility that its project is not needed, not wanted, or not appropriate. By failing to provide a forum for sharing one's philosophy, the organization is presuming that theirs is "universal". This is a sure prescription for generating a lack of interest, at best, and misunderstandings or resentment, at worst.

It is clear that both international donor agencies and foreign NGOs would themselves benefit from greater support of Christian women's organizations. Because the cooperation they would receive in return would enhance their own effectiveness. And, if the Zimbabwean government were also providing formalized support of these indigenous women's organizations, international donors could do so without appearing to circumvent the government.

Some of the reasons the international development agencies and donors do not work with these are organizations are related to issues that could be resolved with some effort. One of them is simply lack of awareness. These Christian women's organizations often do not have the resources to network internationally. Therefore, they are virtually unknown outside Zimbabwe, except in some cases within women's NGO networks and by other struggling organizations who are in a sense competing with them for funding. One possible solution to this issue would be for an organization like the Peace Corps to provide a volunteer to put together promotional materials for these women's groups and assist them in writing grant proposals. Since the Zimbabwean government decides what the Peace Corps does in Zimbabwe, they would of course have to approve such an effort. However, this is a way the government could support these organizations without spending much of its own limited resources.

Another restriction is the religious orientation of the Christian women's organizations. This is an issue for both religious and secular international development agencies. The religious organizations usually restrict themselves to working within their own denominations, and hence many women's groups which do not affiliate to one denomination lose out on this support. In fact, their non-denominational stance could be a lesson to the Western religious NGOs.

For the secular agencies, the lack of support is usually out of fear of supporting proselytizing activities when that is not the mandate for which they receive their own funding to carry out. However, while taking pride in their Christian identity, these organizations for the most part do not proselytize. And even the church-affiliated ones, which do, are careful to not let that interfere with their mission to serve everyone. They are very careful about this because they want to be inclusive, not exclusive, when their target population is people who are already marginalized.

If secular international donor agencies could get past their resistance to Christian organizations, they would have some powerful allies in their work. They could learn from these organizations about the spirituality of the people that their projects are for. Understanding and respecting spirituality, as an important part of any culture, is always a helpful key to success in a particular community development effort. By ignoring local organizations like those in my study, outside agencies often duplicate efforts, cause dissention or confusion, waste resources, and even further the gap between the haves and have-nots in a community.

Both policy and practice implications of this study are clear. Greater recognition of, and collaboration with, Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe by both the

government and the donors will benefit community development in general and women's participation as well. One of the reasons for the lack of support is a lack of information. This study contributes to the gap of knowledge about the work of Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe. It illustrates that there are several well-established, well-run, effective women's groups in the country. They are already doing good work and serving thousands of women, their families and communities. These organizations are doing what they are doing with very limited financial and human resources.

Since this study was primarily a descriptive one, I attempted to gather and compile solid background information for others to build on. There are several areas of further research that could use the case studies and analysis to work from. The first and most obvious one would be to study further the women's organizations themselves. Some of the older organizations could be studied from an historical perspective or in reference to my ideas on how political developments affect the character of the church, and vice versa. Some of the newer ones, as non-governmental organizations,could be examined as part of the growing interest of the role of civil society in emerging nations.

Comparisons between two organizations would be interesting, particularly two that seem similar on a superficial level but in fact may be quite different upon

deeper inspection. Comparisons between the same organization, for example the YWCA, in two African countries would also be useful in examining a variety of issues including the role of culture or of national politics in organizational development. Lastly, it would be most interesting to follow through on my hypothesis that the further removed a Christian organization is from the church, the more relaxed and egalitarian are interactions between men and women. Here I am using "church" to mean a representative of a particular denomination, rather than in the broad sense in which it was used throughout the paper.

Moving away from the Christian women's organizations themselves, there are a few other related areas for further study that could build on my inquiry. One area could be an examination of the variety of educational opportunities available to adult women, including but not limited to those offered by Christian organizations. My study did not discuss at all the many private companies offering courses in Zimbabwe. The accessibility, affordability and relevance of such programs for women would be a good complement to my study. Also, although it was mentioned, I did not go into detail about the government's own efforts in adult education. Comparing private and public educational programs would make an interesting and useful study.

Also a longitudinal study would be very helpful. My own field work did not allow me to observe first-hand the long-

term effects of education and training that women receive. That combining education with development activities improves both was an assumption I made based on what I was told but, one would have to observe that over time or do a follow-up study to really gage its effectiveness.

Another area of research that could build on mine is women's leadership development in Zimbabwe. I was fascinated with what I learned of the lives of the women I interviewed. However, I did not include much of what I learned about them in my data presentation, other than their personal opinions about my topic areas. A study focusing specifically on how and why women become leaders of women's organizations would be fascinating. The women I interviewed were well-educated, articulate, well-traveled, sophisticated women. They could have easily been working in the government or private sector earning much more than they do as executive directors of local NGOs. Why were they not doing so? Why did these women who were elite in so many ways choose a career path that would so obviously keep them out of the upper-class? And related to that would be a further examination of my hypothesis that the very idea of "elitism" with respect to women in Zimbabwe is somewhat superficial, or at least much more complex and subtle than the concept is when considering men.

One last area of further study that would be interesting and helpful is the role of female clergy in

Zimbabwe. I had the opportunity to visit a theological school just before I left the country. They had an enrollment of about 140 students and eight of them were women. I would have loved to interview those women about their career aspirations in, and spiritual journeys to, that very male world.

I learned a great deal from doing this study. Not only about Christian women's organizations in Zimbabwe, but about the church in Zimbabwe, about women's lives in Zimbabwe and also about the research process. I was initially reluctant to do an interview-based study because I thought it intrusive and presumptuous. However the response I got was very positive. Everyone I approached was willing to be interviewed and very open with me. My informants enjoyed talking about their work and the organizations they were affiliated with. They were pleased to speak with someone who shared their interest in women's issues. My concern about the lack of reciprocity also proved unfounded. Just having the opportunity to dialogue and share ideas with someone genuinely interested in their work was return enough for the women I interviewed. However, I still feel that my informants were unusually generous and gracious. That generosity is typical of the women of Zimbabwe and confirms my confidence that individually and collectively they will provide crucial leadership in both Zimbabwe's national development and the worldwide movement for women's rights.

Hopefully disseminating what I learned from them to a larger audience will in some small way assist them in making that contribution.

To conclude, I would like to reflect briefly on what this study meant to me personally and professionally. One of my motivations for choosing my topic was a personal observation based upon professional experience. Since my longest overseas experience was with a church-related NGO, my most significant exposure to development work was from within that milieu. However, even from within that particular situation, I believe I could see beyond it. What I saw was the magnitude of church involvement in development. So I was surprised that both times I did graduate work in international development, religion was almost totally ignored in any and all discussions and writings. Since most development professionals continue to be persons from Western cultures, and since regardless of how I feel about the "development industry" I am a part of it, I felt compelled to contribute something religious to our mostly secular way of thinking and talking about development.

From my academic experience, it was clear that even in discussions of culture, and its importance in development, religion is often ignored. Religion is a major component of virtually every culture, so to ignore it is to do an incomplete study of a society. It seemed that in regions of

the world where "foreign" religions, like Christianity or Islam, did not take root, it was easier for my fellow students to see how interwoven the indigenous religion is with a particular culture. However, in regions where the dominant religion is viewed as foreign, it is often considered external to the culture and therefore not important. This is simply not true.

Both Christianity and Islam have been not just adopted, but adapted by a variety of diverse peoples around the world. They have been so tightly woven into different cultures that there is not much difference between those two and indigenous religions in how they affect people's lives. Since development, hopefully, concerns facilitating positive change in people's lives, any and every part of their situation must be taken into consideration. This is particularly true of something as fundamental as a belief system, and that, essentially, is what religion is. While I would not deny that traditional religions still play an important role in people's lives in the countries where I have lived and worked, it is equally unhelpful to deny the role of Christianity. For most people in Zambia and Zimbabwe (and elsewhere I am sure), the two together form their complete belief system and one is no more important than the other.

Understanding and respecting people's religion and spiritual beliefs is another part of being culturally

sensitive. Although religion makes many educated, professional, "modern" people uncomfortable, it must be included in the discourse on development. Its effects and influence, both positive and negative, are too important to be ignored. Just as we, as outsiders, have to get beyond our discomfort with other aspects of cultures different than our own, so must we get past our aversion to things religious. Perhaps it is so difficult because our discomfort has more to do with our own personal religious history than with the people we are working with. Whether we are religious or not, all of us have some kind of belief system. How and why it developed the way it did is an important part of who we are and is reflected in the way we work. Reflecting, writing and talking about these issues would, I believe, add much vitality to international development education and therefore also to development practice.

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Mrs. T. Chimombe
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Mrs. Jane Hatendi, President
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Mrs. Sekai Holland, National Chairperson
Association of Women's Clubs
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Mr. Innocent Kaseke, National Executive Director
Christian Care
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Rev. M.C. Kuchera, General Secretary
Zimbabwe Council of Churches
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Ms. Mathilda Makombe, Head of Training Dept.
Catholic Development Commission
April 13, 1994 in Harare

Mrs. S. H. Matindike, National General Secretary
Young Women's Christian Association
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Mrs. Mawire, Women's Work Coordinator
Methodist Church in Zimbabwe
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Mrs. Commissioner Moyo
Salvation Army
May 3, 1994 in Harare

Ms. Elizabeth Mutambara, Lecturer
Dept. of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy
University of Zimbabwe

Ms. B. Tanyongana, Director
ZCC Ecumenical Resource & Training Center
May 9, 1994 in Harare

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